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EDITORIAL

SHOTS IN THE CULTURE WAR

Doddering but not dead, Reaganism in its dotage is making fitful attempts to secure its ideology throughout the cultural life of the country. One day the Federal Communications Commission promulgates vague new censorship rules designed to give broadcasting that white-bread taste it lost in the 1960s. Then the United States Information Agency decides to give certain documentary films export labels as "propaganda," thus denying them duty-free status. Now *The New York Times* discovers that a coterie of conservative academics "who continue to uphold a traditional standard of literary quality" is upset about the inclusion of works by nontraditional writers (read women, blacks and bohemians) in college curriculums.

No doubt such weird efforts by public officials and private zealots to suppress the critical imagination and the insurgent spirit are uncoordinated and unplanned. They also seem desperate and last-ditch, as real time runs out on a decade *Newsweek* has already declared defunct. But most important, they are opposed by an increasingly energetic community that seeks to break through the repressive lines drawn by Reagan's cultural *contras*.

The F.C.C. is facing a challenge by Allen Ginsberg and civil liberties lawyers over the threat to the progressive Pacifica radio network, which has been chilled out of its plans for a celebratory rebroadcast of "Howl." Nine independent filmmakers are suing the U.S.I.A. to remove the "propaganda" label from their works on U.S. aggression in Nicaragua, the dangers of uranium mining, and drug use among the urban poor. And those insurgent academics are fighting the establishment to allow students to read Zora Neale Hurston and Frederick Douglass along with Hawthorne and Dickens. Time and tide suddenly seem to be on their side.

PALESTINIANS
Micah Sifry
Alexander Cockburn

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CHINESE-AMERICAN POLITICS
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AN INTERNATION STORY

THE SELLING OF STAR WARS TO EUROPE

MARK SCHAPIRO

Star Wars was supposed to be the greatest U.S. gift to Europe since the Marshall Plan. But now the Reagan Administration's Strategic Defense Initiative is not only obstructing a strategic arms accord; it is also undermining European trust in American leadership of the Western alliance. To woo European cooperation with S.D.I., Washington made extravagant promises. Today, those promises have evaporated and the Europeans are angry and disillusioned.

Europeans reacted to President Reagan's launch of S.D.I. in March 1983 with widespread dismay. Their doubts abated only after the Pentagon convinced defense officials that S.D.I.'s bounty would reinvigorate their countries' high-tech industries and catapult the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's defenses into the twenty-first century. By late 1986 the Administration had managed to win the endorsement of Britain, Italy and West Germany, as well as the acquiescence of NATO itself. Since then, however, the anticipated flood of research funds has turned out to be a trickle; Washington has violated every allied demand to limit the scope and speed of the project's development; and the only strategic rationale for European involvement in S.D.I.—to develop a local version of the "nuclear umbrella" that would repel Soviet short- and intermediate-range missiles—has become irrelevant since Reagan and Gorbachev's agreement to destroy most of those weapons.

The legacy of the Administration's S.D.I. sales blitz is a damaged alliance. A report last September by the Military Committee of the North Atlantic Assembly, a committee of parlia-

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LETTERS.

SALAD DAYS

Northampton, Mass.

O.K., O.K., so I may have made a mistake [see "Letters," Dec. 19, 1987]. A prominent and usually well-informed ex-Shachtmanite told me it was Max Shachtman—not Wallace Markfield—who got hit with that bowl of potato salad, and I neglected to check the story out any further. Maybe Carl Solomon threw two bowls of potato salad? (Does this mean I have to give back the Pulitzer?)

Maurice Isserman

SCALES WRONGLY TIPPED

New York City

Once again, Junius Scales has suffered an injustice. This time through the review by Fred Pfeil of his autobiography, *Cause at Heart*, written jointly with Richard Nickson [Sept. 12, 1987]. And in *The Nation*, of all places. Pfeil records some of the important facts, e.g., that Scales was the only person ever jailed in the United States for mere membership in the Communist Party. He also finds the book to be of some value. He writes that historians of the period will find useful descriptions here of the party's role in organizing civil rights work and the war effort, of cadre training, sectarian infighting and, not least, of Scales' own government-produced show trial. He praises Scales' honesty, idealism and intelligence. But he is put off by the style and tone of the book—it is eerie; he takes the prose style to be in part a "symptom of the toll that struggle exacted, of the exhaustion of a good man."

I find Pfeil's judgment incredible. The book is of great importance, not merely to historians. It should be required reading for all who want to learn about the South in the early and middle decades of our century, of the nature and role of political action, of unionism, more generally for all who want to think about the things they care about. We learn not merely about our past; Scales' poignant reflections on our current political situation are brief but illuminating, never self-serving. Then why does the reviewer come close to asking us to dismiss this book? I think Pfeil cannot forgive Scales for not offering brief one-liners about the true road to political salvation, to be used perhaps at political revival meetings.

Pfeil's review of *Cause at Heart* is part of a joint review. The other book is a biography of Miguel Mármol. We are told that "Roque Dalton's *Miguel Mármol* recounts the testimony of a Salvadoran shoemaker who co-founded his country's Communist Party, miraculously survived the government's massacres of 1932 and somehow kept on organizing through the repression of the next twenty-odd years."

Pfeil suggests that "for staunch party militant Miguel Mármol, now 82 and living happily in Havana, any empathy with Scales or agreement with his critique of the U.S.C.P. would likely register as so much counter-revolutionary sympathy for the devil. Indeed, one of the pleasures of his *testimonio*, for us and no doubt for him, is that of naming the names of those who deserted or betrayed *la causa* over the years."

Now, I assume that Pfeil would not accept Mármol's judgments, that he would not dismiss a man who went to jail rather than name names, that he would not accuse a man who left the party because of Hungary in 1956 as thereby abandoning the cause. Then why does he come close to dismissing Scales' book? Is it because he thinks that Mármol would dismiss it? But on some very essential points at issue he does not seem to agree with Mármol.

Pfeil tells us that every political struggle involves some argument about the meaning of the past. Scales teaches us much about our past; Pfeil, at least in this review, does not.

Sidney Morgenbesser

PFEIL REPLIES

Paris

Sidney Morgenbesser can't understand how I can sympathize with Junius Scales' commitment to radical democracy, agree with his critique of the authoritarianism of the U.S.C.P. and find fault with the strain of Stalinism that winds in and out of Miguel Mármol's voice, yet still find *Miguel Mármol* a more interesting and valuable book than *Cause at Heart*. So his incomprehension shows up in the form of a wild charge, implicit in the "true road-revival meeting" rhetoric that I must harbor some Stalinoid fundamentalism in my soul, and in the rather aimless swipe at his letter's close.

I doubt that this response can relieve Morgenbesser of his anger and disappointment, but I would at least like to dispel his confusion. What *Miguel Mármol* has that *Cause at Heart* lacks is not "one-liners" but a complexity of voice and style that weaves its way through, across and against Mármol's official politics. That contradictory patterning teaches us at least as much about the past *and* present of twentieth-century revolutionary movements in Central America as Junius Scales teaches us about life inside the U.S.C.P. And in the present moment it is a moot point at best which history is the more important and urgent one for us as fully American socialists.

That's one reason I prefer *Miguel Mármol* to *Cause at Heart*, for all the latter's virtue and good will. But on another, less officially political level, I also find *Miguel Mármol* ten times more fun to read. Junius Scales' decent, even-toned memoir of struggle within and against the U.S.C.P. from the late 1930s through the 1950s should be required reading for students of the subject. But there are other reasons for picking up a book, aside from the desire to educate oneself: There's the savor of story, the music of language, the pleasures of tasting and listening and dancing to all that. Such pleasures have no necessary relationship to political correctness, as *Cause at Heart* and *Miguel Mármol* remind us; but wouldn't even the democratic socialism Morgenbesser and I would both like to see be poorer and sadder for the lack of them?

Fred Pfeil

A HOUSE DIVIDED

Philadelphia

In his hagiographic review of David Montgomery's *The Fall of the House of Labor: The Workplace, the State, and American Labor Activism, 1865-1925* [Sept. 5, 1987], Michael Kazin has no room for criticism of the author's inadequate treatment of the Trade Union Educational League. In a book of over 500 pages, Montgomery devotes barely three pages to the T.U.E.L. His mention of William Z. Foster, head of the league, is limited to three references. One is a footnote on page 420, referring to Foster's work as secretary of the National Committee to Organize Iron and Steel Workers. This is certainly a shocking disregard of the driving force behind the great steel strike of 1919 and one of the most influential labor figures of the period.

Equally shocking is the absence of any reference to V.I. Lenin and, in particular, his important pamphlet *Left-Wing Communism: An Infantile Disorder*. When published in English in the United States, it played a significant role in assisting Foster to overcome dual unionist influences among militant workers, including those in the early Communist Party.

Montgomery quotes the Workers' (Communist) Party as announcing in December 1921 that its purpose was "to co-ordinate the entire left wing of the American labor movement within the existing unions." He then observes: "The most important vehicle for this effort was the Trade Union Educational League." But it was Foster (buttressed by Lenin's *Left-Wing Communism*) who influenced the Workers' Party to abandon dual unionism and concentrate on working "within the existing unions." Only then did the Communists endorse the Trade Union Educational League.

It is significant that David Saposs, one of the most astute observers of the labor scene in the 1920s and whose papers Montgomery has researched at the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, believed that the Trade Union Educational League was the major force for progressive unionism in the labor movement. He expressed this view in response to a query from Roger Baldwin of the American Fund for Public Service—the "Garland Fund"—

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EDITORIALS.

Market for Greed

The manic-depressive mood-swings of the world's financial markets, in periods of decreasing duration since the crash of October 19, demonstrate a general and overwhelming sense that the global economy is now completely out of control. That is to say, it is out of the hands that have traditionally tried to manipulate it—the governments of the great merchant powers—and seems responsive only to the transnational speculators who make decisions that will create a surplus here or cause starvation there on their merest whims and transient terrors. Two hundred billion dollars is traded every day on the world's currency market. Nearly $2 trillion is available all the time in "offshore" dollars, beyond the reach of official American supervision. In a dozen short weeks Americans' economic consciousness has been wrenched out of a national framework, as we get the next morning's Hong Kong gold price on the previous evening's news and learn by what percentage the value of the dollar in Tokyo has changed since yesterday. But it is all news that can't be used, economics for voyeurs, Global Wall Street: The Movie.

When Richard Nixon proclaimed, "We are all Keynesians now," in 1971, he surely spoke too soon. We are post-Keynesians now. The modest economic strategies his Republican Party stubbornly resisted for so long worked only (if they worked at all) on the national level, where government economists could shift fiscal gears and fine-tune monetary policies according to the demands of a system

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they controlled. It was at least theoretically possible to bring a bit of democracy to the process. Those decisions about starvation and surplus—about the dividing of pies and the goring of oxen—were in the hands of elected and appointed officials who were part of a political dynamic. Now the decision-makers participate only in the dialectic of greed, otherwise known as the unregulated market.

Their currency market, their stock market, their commodity market and their international investment market may work efficiently to keep the global economy spinning, but they are egregiously oblivious to the real needs of people other than the speculators themselves. Thus, the fall of the dollar will contribute to the decline of American wage-earners' standard of living, first as consumer goods become prohibitively expensive and then as interest rates rise, growth contracts and inflation waters down buying power. The stagflation that marked the late 1970s is likely to be remembered as the characteristic mode of an economy in slow but steady decline.

One would think that in an election year the looming crisis that almost everybody sees would be the subject of intense political debate. But in fact the candidates have been largely silent both in terms of analysis and prescription. George Bush has not yet revived his sensible critique of "voodoo economics." Jack Kemp correctly targets the Federal Reserve Board as an undemocratic and usually destructive force in the economy, but he goes off the deep end when he proposes a return to the gold standard as the solution to the nation's ills. The Democrats have all bought the convenient mythology of the budget deficit as a dragon to be slain before the princess of prosperity can be wooed, but none offer a strategy for *perestroika*, American-style.

The several economic ills that now afflict the country have complex causes that cannot be wished out of existence, but they also suggest a common treatment, as a start. That is to bring global speculation, multinational machinations, unregulated markets and capricious capitalism back under the political control of those most affected by economic transactions. Like a free press, a market is free only for those who own it, or profit from it. Greed is great for a few, while the going is good. It is never much for the many. Now the going is bad, and another system must be constructed to even things out.

Eyeless in Gaza

Jerusalem

Last June the Israeli press was filled with articles discussing the twentieth anniversary of the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Many writers remarked on the apparent normalization of the situation, the subtle effect of years of physical integration and economic entanglement. The old Green Line marking the pre-1967 borders had disappeared from the Israeli map and from the public eye. The estimated 170,000 Palestinians toiling in Israel were invisible, their labor exchanges in the big cities casually referred to by Israelis as "slave markets." Gaza was on another planet.

The ongoing Palestinian uprising has destroyed that dangerously comfortable feeling. To the dismay of most Israelis, the Palestinians are "creating facts on the ground." A new chapter in the hundred-year war between the two peoples has opened. The range of Israeli response is enlightening. With the full blessing of the Cabinet, Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin has clamped down hard. At least publicly, the army is sticking to the "outside agitator, passive population" theory. Its spokesman says that the nine Palestinians it has moved to deport were among the "chief organizers and instigators" of the uprising. But it knows Palestinian resistance is everywhere. According to the army's Chief of Staff, Lieut. Gen. Dan Shomron, in Gaza alone there are now more troops deployed than it took to occupy all the territories in 1967. Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir and the bulk of the Foreign Ministry are borrowing whole chapters from Menachem Begin's book, attacking the foreign press for inflaming the situation and the United States for interfering in Israeli internal affairs. So far, the best that Shimon Peres has managed is an attack on the Likud for neglecting the so-called Jordanian option, which would pave the way toward negotiations with the Palestine Liberation Organization.

As the parties begin to position themselves for the general election in November, other facts are being created on the ground. Industry Minister Ariel Sharon's move into a house in East Jerusalem in late December has drawn criticism in the press here because it will cost the strapped Treasury nearly $1 million a year to protect him. But the greater worry about Sharon is that all the unrest will strengthen that portion of the Israeli public—generally at least 20 percent—that wants an authoritarian government to take control of the situation.

However, the Gaza and West Bank rebellion has also shocked many Israelis in a potentially positive way. The Peace Now movement has awakened from a long slumber. Perhaps even more important, the unwillingness of some soldiers to serve as occupiers has gone public. On January 1, 160 reservists identified with Yesh Gvul ("There Is a Limit"), a group that arose in opposition to military service in Lebanon, announced their refusal "to take part in suppressing the uprising and insurrection in the occupied territories." One of their number has been in jail for more than a month.

The new generation of Palestinians in the streets has apparently shaken up its elders as well. Last week Hanna Siniora, the editor of *Al-Fajr*, and several other leading Palestinian figures announced plans for a widespread campaign of nonviolent civil disobedience, including refusing to pay Israeli taxes and boycotting Israeli products. As Siniora said, "Till today the Israeli occupation has been a profitable business. We want to raise the cost." The way things are going it will be a long time before the Israeli-Palestinian civil war is ended. But only when they feel the costs of occupation will the Israelis begin to push for a solution. Whether that solution is to be talks with the Palestinians or massive expulsion depends on the ongoing struggle here and abroad.

MICAH SIFRY

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The S.D.I. Drain

The Reagan Administration's attempt to put America's economic house in order by reining in the galloping deficit will be in vain if plans for the Strategic Defense Initiative continue. At an estimated cost of $400 billion to $1 trillion, S.D.I., or Star Wars, is not only the largest and fastest-growing program in our history but, by any measure, a de facto industrial policy. [For the view from Europe, see Mark Schapiro's cover article.] The Administration has already spent $9.5 billion in the past four years and proposes to spend another $37 billion in the next five years for S.D.I. research and development alone. This country can ill afford such a diversion of scarce financial resources into arcane areas of research that lack commercial potential and do little to improve industrial productivity.

Today, the government is spending over 73 percent of its national R&D funds on projects for the military—up from 50 percent in 1980. Proceeding with S.D.I. will increase Pentagon control of scientific research. In 1986, S.D.I. already took up a staggering 84 percent of the growth in Defense Department funds. And according to Robert Reich, an industrial policy advocate, the S.D.I. Organization will command roughly 20 percent of high-technology venture capital over the next four years. Research in key areas ranging from very-high-speed integrated circuits to advanced computers to optics will be sponsored by the Pentagon's S.D.I. Organization.

The schedule-driven and weapons-oriented nature of the S.D.I. research program, however, does not bode well for advances in civilian products. With over half the annual S.D.I. budget allocated for such experiments as the "Excalibur" X-ray laser and kinetic energy weapons tests, the program is more concerned with displaying measurable results to maintain public and Congressional support than with finding civilian uses.

Nor are the extreme performance requirements of technology in space likely to find cost-effective applications on earth. It is difficult to imagine private uses for such S.D.I. technologies as high-energy lasers that burn holes in metal at a distance of 1,800 miles or computer chips that are hardened against nuclear radiation blasts.

In contrast, Japan's funding of civilian research on artificial intelligence is designed to improve business and consumer productivity; its laser work, to corner the market for compact-disc players and fiber optic communications. If S.D.I. continues to be the backbone of American efforts in such high-tech areas, the result could be, as a physicist at Stanford University predicts, "the demise of the U.S. commercial laser industry in the next decade."

Where innovations in such areas as artificial intelligence, laser optics and computer software do find commercial usefulness, their exploitation will depend on the ability of companies to wrest the technology from the government's top secret files. The Pentagon's control of the dissemination of scientific findings in the name of national security has already begun to have a chilling effect on high-tech research. For example, Pentagon restrictions on disclosure of information about very-high-speed integrated circuit chips is so tight that close-up photographs may not be published.

Finally, a decision to produce and deploy an S.D.I. system is sure to trigger a "brain drain" that will severely damage civilian innovation in the nation's beleaguered manufacturing companies. Up to 180,000 scientists and engineers could be on the S.D.I. payroll by the year 2005. Industries competing for this talent will face additional costs of retraining and paying salary hikes to woo them back.

The program has spawned a powerful lobby of beneficiaries in the nation's arms industry. Between fiscal 1983 and fiscal 1986, more than 74 percent of the $7.3 billion in S.D.I. research contracts went to just twenty contractors. Five firms alone—Lockheed, General Motors, Boeing, T.R.W. and E.G.&G.—received a total of $2.4 billion. With military funding accounting for 5 percent (G.M.) to 53 percent (Lockheed) of their total sales, the firms' dependency on S.D.I. for future profitability is considerable.

In a potential conflict of interest, if S.D.I. is deployed these contractors will determine the feasibility of the program and decide when production and deployment should begin. If Pentagon plans for early deployment of a partial defense of missile silos, as revealed by a recent report from Senator William Proxmire's office, go forward, contractors may reap the benefits of multibillion-dollar orders as early as 1994. The danger is that such programmatic and economic momentum will give S.D.I. a life of its own regardless of its technical feasibility or strategic merit.

Nonetheless, a Democratic Administration in 1989 might put the S.D.I. genie back into the bottle in the same way that Jimmy Carter canceled the B-1 bomber. With the need to balance the budget and increased reluctance to abandon the ABM treaty, Congress has shown signs of resistance to going full speed ahead with S.D.I. Only 15 percent of Americans sampled in an April 1987 public opinion poll conducted by Cambridge Reports supported a system designed to protect only U.S. missiles and key military bases.

Under these conditions, it makes sense to reduce S.D.I. funding to no more than $2 billion a year—the amount that the Reagan Administration had projected for military research before embarking on the program. That level of spending would comply with the ABM treaty, hedge against a potential Soviet technological breakthrough and help reduce our Federal budget deficit by $27 billion in the next five years alone. And over a twenty-year period, it would save each American household up to $12,000 in taxes.

Efforts to revitalize our competitiveness by reducing deficits will be choked off if the nation proceeds to buy S.D.I. on the installment plan. If America's economy is to make a comeback, we can no longer delay correcting the Star Wars vision.

ROSY NIMROODY

Rosy Nimroody is national security project director for the Council on Economic Priorities, a New York City–based independent nonprofit research organization. She is the author of the recently published study Star Wars: The Economic Fallout *(Ballinger/Harper & Row).*

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BEAT THE DEVIL.

The Rebellion in Israel and the Territories

The usual regulatory mechanisms of the mainstream U.S. media (aim: exclusion of troubling or potentially disruptive information, narcosis of population) processed the turmoil in the occupied territories and in Israel itself with some initial difficulty, as beleaguered news editors yearned for the sanctuary of phrases such as "uneasy calm prevails," or the more severely tranquil "return to normalcy."

This schizoid outlook was tellingly revealed in *Newsweek*'s story of January 4. The report read as though two hands had struggled for mastery. Hand Number One produced an unusually frank description of conditions in the occupied territories, where "Arabs have no political rights and no citizenship," and in Israel itself, where Arabs

> were granted citizenship and the vote but were subjected to heavy-handed military rule until 1966. Jews took more than half their land, and industrial development was steered away from Arab areas. Most young Arabs still are not allowed to serve in the Israeli Army, a major avenue to civilian jobs. The government gives Arab towns less than 30 percent of the per capita subsidies paid to Jewish communities. Arab towns are short of hospitals, sewers, paved roads and schoolrooms.

Hand Number One plunged on: "Like the inhabitants of a South African Bantustan, Arabs commute to work in the factories of upper Nazareth. When a few of them tried to find homes in the Jewish town, however, they were chased out by local residents."

Hand Number Two took a more meditative approach:

> The *restless* Arab family presents a *challenge* to the 3.5 million Israeli Jews, and a *threat* to their *democracy*. The 2.2 million Arabs who live in Israel and the occupied territories are an oppressed and alienated underclass. The Arabs have a much *higher* birthrate than the Jews, and demographers calculate that by the middle of the next century, they will outnumber the Jews between the Mediterranean and the River Jordan, creating an Arab *majority* in an *officially* Jewish state.

Like the Seven Dwarfs in *Snow White*, the words I have italicized bustle about their appointed tasks. "Restless," but in what sense restless? the fecund motions of the Arab womb? or perhaps an inner spiritual agitation that, who knows, might prompt these Arab families voluntarily to wander across the Jordan and thus settle the problem. "Challenge" rings with the timbre of plucky defiance and, conversely, the morally exigent reality of a choice that cannot long be postponed. Those under challenge turn out to be custodians of "democracy," whose beauty is only slightly marred by the monosyllable "their."

The paragraph then hurries toward the unappetizing reality of demographic ratio. As in reporting in the late 1960s and early 1970s from Ulster, the fact that one ethnic or religious group may be procreating more rapidly than another can be made to carry an aroma of moral laxity and seditious concupiscence. Finally, there is the concept that such abandoned procreation amounts to a "time bomb," a phrase without which no demographic alarum is complete. *Newsweek* complies in its headline "Israel's Arab Time Bomb."

What people do to time bombs—the people, that is, who do not want them to go off—is disarm them. But how? *Newsweek* sidled up to the issue: "It is an open question whether Israel will be able to meet the demographic challenge and preserve a democratic system." In other words, Meir Kahane might turn out to be right after all. But now, with Kahanism ("They Must Go") on the cusp between "extremist fantasy" and "conceivable option," *Newsweek* quotes Yitzhak Shamir, who offers his own firm answer: "We have overcome such things in the past. There is no end to this war, and it is a war in which we must triumph, in each and every generation." Not included in the story is any intimation that there might be another answer, such as a binational democratic secular state.

What's an Army For?

Thomas L. Friedman, Jerusalem bureau chief for *The New York Times*, proposed to his readers on January 2 that Israel's tough tactics appeared to be working, at least temporarily, "but at a price of turning the Israeli military increasingly into an internal police force." This suggestion that the military is spiritually and physically apt only for engagements as straightforward as Agincourt or tank combat in the Sinai is an old one, confected to avoid the truth that armies—including Israel's—mostly exist to quell internal subversion and to engage in what is nowadays called, repellently, low-intensity conflict or, accurately, punitive violence. What does Friedman imagine the I.D.F. has been doing in the occupied territories for twenty years if not performing the policing functions of detaining people without charge, closing universities, operating military courts where there is no chance of civilian appeal, confiscating books, posters and otherwise banning or circumscribing free expression, protecting illegal Jewish settlements and, overall, repressing the efforts of a people to be free?

Where was Friedman when, at a press conference in Jerusalem on September 9, three Palestinian boys told of their experiences of torture at the hands of the Israeli military? As recounted in the Palestinian weekly *Al-Fajr*, one of the boys, Riad Faraj, age 15, said of his three arrests:

> Each time they arrested me they beat up the other members of my family. The last time I was arrested, they broke two bones in my father's chest and back. They also smashed furniture and threw things about. They handcuffed me and beat me during the journey to Fara'a [a military prison in Nablus]. Once we arrived, they took me to a "doctor" for a "checkup." I found out later that this "checkup" is to locate any physical weakness to concentrate on during torture. They paid particular attention to my leg, which was once injured and was still sensitive. Before they began interrogation, they asked me if I was ready to confess. They then hanged me by my wrists, naked, outside in the cold, and gave me hot and cold showers alternatively. A hood covered in manure was put over my head.

Faraj was put in detention for eight months, after a soldier testified that he saw the boy throwing stones. His experiences and those of sixteen other youths are recorded in a

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report titled "Children of Palestinian Refugees vs. The Israeli Military: Personal Accounts of Arrest, Detention and Torture," by Dina Lawrence and Kameel Nasr. The report, distributed by the Palestinian Human Rights Campaign (Suite 1308, 220 S. State Street, Chicago, IL 60604), went unremarked by *The Times*; an account of the press conference was buried in *The Washington Post*, under the ho-hum headline "Pro-Palestinian Group Accuses Israel."

Friedman's perspective was perhaps best exhibited in a truly revolting article on January 5, in which he wrote benignly: "The soldiers do not view themselves as occupiers. They view themselves essentially as police officers trying to preserve order against a few Palestinian agitators who want to stir up a population that is basically ready to live with the status quo." With equal sympathy he relayed a soldier's remark about the looks he gets from Arab girls: "They want us. They are very interested."

A final commentary on the absurd army-unschooled-in-policing myth came in an article in the international edition of *The Jerusalem Post* for September 19, titled "'Big Brother' in the West Bank," a reference to an $8.5 million data bank project of the Israeli Defense Ministry to keep tabs on the property, political attitudes and family ties of Palestinians under occupation. The information is used by the military authorities, euphemistically called the Civil Administration, in granting permits, licenses and travel documents. In his report of developments in the West Bank during 1986 and early 1987 Meron Benvenisti, prominent Israeli critic of the occupation, said the army's new computer system "may prove to be a milestone in the institutionalization of the ultimate police state in the territories." He then catalogued the casualties (before the recent uprisings) of this police state: a record twenty-two Palestinians killed and sixty-seven injured, nine deported, ninety-nine put in administrative detention, 102 put under town arrest, seventy houses demolished or sealed.

Those Outside Agitators

Some hardened Likud lobbyists like William Safire chose to detect the root of the problem in the P.L.O. manipulating from afar, in the time-honored fashion of the Bolsheviks, the Fenians, the Zealots and even earlier sons of the Serpent disrupting an otherwise contented Eden. There is something plaintively pathetic in this invocation of the P.L.O., since one of Israel's achievements in the past decade has been to contrive the replacement of the secular, politically accommodating program of the P.L.O. with the indubitably uncompromising stance of the fundamentalists, who were central to the rebellion. Nor was the uprising a singular, contrived outburst. From April 1986 to May 1987, Benvenisti reports, 3,150 violent demonstrations occurred in the occupied territories. The *Jerusalem Post* reporter Joel Greenberg noted that "a growth in the number of disturbances relative to terror attacks indicates a trend toward increasingly spontaneous, locally initiated resistance," and quoted Benvenisti's report as saying, "The problem [for the I.D.F.] is no longer limited to breaking up organized terrorist cells, but has evolved into population control."

Safire wails that Israel is under unfair scrutiny when it comes to its actions in the occupied territories, claiming the press ignores "the heaving of a Molotov cocktail" and concentrates on the "subduing of the bomb thrower." In fact, images of insurgent Arabs dominate, in marked contrast to the tactful treatment accorded the Israeli response, from a soldier's shooting of a Palestinian woman who interrupted her laundry work to call out that he not harm a fleeing boy, to the air force's murder of twenty-one civilians in its terror bombing of southern Lebanon on January 3—though the aftermath of the latter attack was sufficiently photogenic for some television coverage. What the press has long ignored is the growing Palestinian defiance and the accelerated Israeli attempts to suppress it. More common than the incisive report from the front has been the drone from the distracted publicist: A.M. Rosenthal writing on July 12 that "political freedom may be gaining in the rest of the world but has passed the Middle East by except for Israel," and defining Israel's major problems as "the antagonism of the Arab states that never let her put down the gun, and the psychological and political burden of being an occupation force in the West Bank and Gaza." Thus does Zionism meet Kipling.

Fake Balance

Like the two characters in Thomas Love Peacock's *Headlong Hall*, forever arguing whether things are getting better or worse, the pundits circle the kraal of Israel's "troubled democracy" and "tragic occupation." Safire, as befits a chorister of free-market optimism, suggests that economic rather than demographic growth will assuage the situation, and prosperous Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank will come to love autonomy without sovereignty.

And against Safire there is the armchair catastrophist Amos Kenan, writing here in *The Nation* with luxurious dolor about the recent "round of violence," for which everyone must bear some blame, meaning that no blame need be attributed to anyone in particular.

This is the acrobatic maneuver known as fake balance. Kenan the acrobat mops his eyes and abdicates any responsible assessment of the situation, thus betraying considerably less conviction than the British Foreign Minister, David Mellor, who upon visiting a refugee camp in Gaza on January 4 publicly stated: "Conditions here are an affront to civilized values; and it is appalling that a few miles up the coast from here there is prosperity, while here there is misery on a scale that rivals anything in the world. . . . Israel cannot duck its responsibilities. . . . To write them [the uprisings] off as externally inspired or caused by the P.L.O. is to totally underestimate the misery of the occupation." It is a measure of the moral and political failure of the U.S. press that a Conservative Foreign Minister can address the situation with more vigor than the correspondent for a journal supposedly on the cutting edge of U.S. progressive opinion.

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BELTWAY BANDITS.

DAVID CORN
JEFFERSON MORLEY

■ Singlaub Strikes Back

"Retired" Maj. Gen. John Singlaub must be feeling besieged these days. Last month the I.R.S. yanked the tax-exempt status from his U.S. Council for World Freedom, which has been a supplier of the *contras*. And as the Christic Institute's antiracketeering suit against Singlaub and other *contra* supporters moves ahead, Singlaub has to find funds for his defense. But the general is on the offense as well.

The Friends of General Singlaub recently distributed to the press a "white paper" that compares the Christic Institute to China's Red Guard. David Fenton, a public relations consultant for the institute, is described as being "to America's radical left what Goebbels was to Germany's Nazis." Tony Avirgan, a plaintiff in the case, is called "an itinerant journalist, atheist and motorcycle racer."

By Singlaub's own claim he has done more than just sling mud at his political opponents. In a full-page fund-raising appeal in last month's *Soldier of Fortune*, Singlaub bragged, "My sources are in place in Afghanistan, Mozambique, Angola, Nicaragua, Southeast Asia . . . AND . . . within the communist-front groups working in America to destroy our Constitution." So is Singlaub running a domestic spying operation? No, said Joyce Downey, executive director of the U.S. Council for World Freedom: "We're collecting information." Asked to identify the groups the general has infiltrated, she said that could be answered only by Singlaub, who was unavailable. "We don't have enough money or time or personnel to spy," Downey added. "But we do have a lot of people who are in position to help us."

■ High Flying

What Jim Denby was doing in his Cessna 172 over Nicaragua when he was forced down by the Sandinistas in December is still a mystery. But a profile of him in The *State-Journal Register* of Springfield, Illinois, last June 14 raises a number of suspicions. Denby, an Illinois farmer with a spread in Costa Rica, is a close friend of John Hull, the C.I.A.-linked rancher who has aided the *contras*. He also says he was pals with a C.I.A. station chief in Costa Rica, presumably Joe Fernandez, who was part of the secret *contra* resupply network. Denby's Costa Rican farm has been home at times to hundreds of *contras*. More intriguing, though, is the purpose once served by his Illinois farmhouse. In a raid there in 1984 police found four pounds of marijuana, more than a pound of cocaine and more than $10,000. That earned his son, Jim Denby Jr., a four-year prison sentence. Is there any connection between Denby's penchant for the *contras* and his family's narcotics history? That's something that Congressional investigators probing charges of *contra* drug smuggling should take up.

■ F.T.C.'s Useful Idiot

When Howard Phillips, the head of the Conservative Caucus, called Ronald Reagan "a useful idiot for Soviet propaganda" on the eve of last month's summit, he was two-thirds right. Reagan has been a U.I., but for the Phillips family. Shortly before Phillips unleashed his wrath, Reagan nominated as commissioner of the Federal Trade Commission Susan Phillips, sister of Howard.

Susan does not have much experience with antitrust or consumer protection issues, the areas the F.T.C. polices. Instead, she has devotion to the right. From 1976 to 1982 she worked at the Conservative Caucus, coming in as an office manager and leaving as director of the group's research division. There she led a defund-the-left campaign that tried to block Federal aid to progressive organizations. She then waged this crusade as a consultant inside the Department of Education, screening grants and contracts. From there she went on to head the Federal Institute of Museum Services.

All of this is unorthodox training for an F.T.C. commissioner; most are lawyers or economists schooled in consumer and business law. More germane to Phillips's nomination, perhaps, is her current position as associate director of the Office of Presidential Personnel, the White House headhunting service. Phillips may now want a post to carry her through another regime. At the F.T.C. she'd have a guaranteed seven-year job, regardless of who's elected President.

In these lame-duck days Phillips faces a tough fight or—worse, for her—no fight, if the Senate Consumer Subcommittee decides to let the nomination die with the Administration. Subcommittee chair Albert Gore Jr., a presidential hopeful with a decent record on consumer affairs, might see some easy headlines in an anti-Phillips drive.

■ Actuarial Justice

Justice American-style is more and more often meted out according to statistical odds rather than individual considerations. Witness the Federal sentencing guidelines that went into effect in November, under which prison sentences are determined by a kind of actuarial table: a fixed formula based on the nature of the offense (e.g., Was it committed with a gun?) and the offender's previous conviction record. The guidelines are based on a calculation of how to keep the most dangerous offenders off the streets for the longest period of time. The laudable goal is to reduce the disparities among sentences given to individuals convicted of similar crimes. But sentencing guidelines, already used in at least seven states, limit the discretion of judges to tailor the punishment to the unique circumstances of the crime and the criminal. If criminals are treated more fairly as a group in actuarial justice, they may be treated less fairly as individuals.

As the burden on the criminal justice system grows, the actuarial approach is becoming more attractive for deciding who gets bail, who gets parole, who gets assigned to halfway houses, even who gets arrested. State troopers around the country now have a profile for identifying suspected drug couriers driving north from Florida. Although based on sound statistical reasoning, actuarial justice points up a basic tension in the criminal justice system: American society sets up individualistic ideals ("Do your own thing") yet increasingly seeks to administer justice by applying group norms. Actuarial justice is the logical result.

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ARTICLES.

PIED PIPER OF THE CONFUSED

Kahane's 'Good Jewish Boys'

ROBERT I. FRIEDMAN

On a fog-shrouded road between Jerusalem and Ramallah on the Israeli-occupied West Bank, two young American supporters of Rabbi Meir Kahane put on their prayer shawls to *daven* ("pray"), then pulled ski masks over their faces, slipped on black leather gloves and loaded a U.S.-made M-16 automatic rifle.

Around 5:30 on that chilly March morning in 1984, the men watched an Arab bus wind around a steep curve. As it approached, they jumped from a ditch that ran parallel to the road and one opened fire on the driver's window and the bus's right side. The volley lasted three to four seconds. While nine Arabs lay wounded inside the blood-spattered vehicle, the Jews ran a quarter-mile to a prearranged spot, where a friend from New York City waited in a Hertz rental car.

When the youths were later arrested by the Israeli police, Kahane told a press conference that his followers were "good Jewish boys" and that the machine-gunning was "sanctified by God."

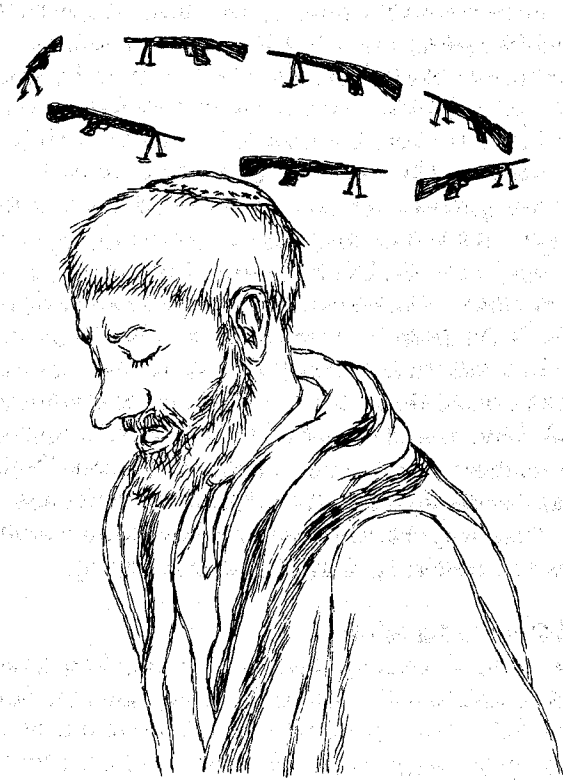
The bus attack was part of a growing wave of violence committed by right-wing Jews against Palestinian Arabs in the occupied territories. In the past few years, the Israeli authorities have broken up several Jewish, anti-Arab terrorist undergrounds affiliated with Kahane's Kach Party and Gush Emunim, the mystical-Messianic movement that has spearheaded Israel's West Bank settlement drive. These militant organizations are committed to annexing the occupied territories and expelling Arabs who cannot live passively under Israeli rule. Many of their hard-line members are recent American Jewish immigrants.

Despite Israeli government attempts to delegitimize Kahane, who currently has a seat in the Knesset, a recent poll published in the magazine *Monitin* revealed that 21 percent of the Israeli public approves of his fiercely anti-Arab views. While the Brooklyn-born rabbi's supporters in Israel are mainly poor Sephardic slum youth, in the United States, where he raises money, Kahane has over the years attracted an odd collection of admirers, including former Haagen-Dazs ice cream president Reuben Mattus, 1987 Tony Award–winner Jackie Mason and attorney Barry Slotnick, who last year successfully defended subway gunman Bernhard Goetz and reputed mobster John Gotti.

Robert I. Friedman, a 1987 Alicia Patterson Journalism Fellow, is a frequent contributor to The Nation.

Kach supporter Matt Liebowitz, a bearded, disarmingly soft-spoken 24-year-old who served twenty-six months in an Israeli prison for the 1984 bus attack, currently lives with his wife in Far Rockaway, Queens. A young man who values violence, Liebowitz still frequents Jewish Defense League haunts in New York City, even though recent events have shaken New York's tightknit Jewish militant community. Last September, 24-year-old Jay Cohen committed suicide in a resort in the Catskill Mountains, just weeks before he was to be sentenced for his role in six J.D.L. bombings in the United States between 1984 and 1986. Following Cohen's suicide, several prominent J.D.L. members left for Israel, reportedly fearing that Cohen had left behind a note that may have implicated them in an unrelated wave of terrorist bombings in the United States that are the subject of a Federal grand jury investigation.

Liebowitz and Cohen had much in common. They were both middle-class kids from broken homes who were into body building, Torah study and a single-minded devotion to the teachings of Rabbi Kahane. In fact, Liebowitz's career in "Jewish activism," which began in Chicago, where he was raised, and led to New York and later to the West Bank of the River Jordan, is similar to the path taken by many young American Jews who get hooked on Kahane's dark vision of ridding Israel of its Arabs. "Violence is a tool," Liebowitz told me during an interview at a yeshiva in Far Rockaway where he sometimes studies. "Kahane says violence is not a nice thing, but that it's sometimes necessary. For me and for others there was a certain mystical attachment to blood and violence. This was the violence that drew us to the J.D.L. and bonded us together in the struggle. . . . Kahane



DRAWINGS BY GIORA CARMI

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taught us that what we were doing was true and correct according to the Torah."

Liebowitz was not always interested in the "Jewish struggle." He was raised in an assimilated middle-class Jewish home where Judaism had more ritual than meaning. Like many future J.D.L. members, he was embarrassed by his religion. "I had no connection to Judaism," Liebowitz told me. "When I was a kid I used to hang out in the inner city and saw old Jews harassed by black gangs. I had a very bad image of Jews—that they were weak, that they were worms."

Matt Liebowitz was 13 when his parents divorced. He moved in with his mother, then later with his father, a family therapist in Chicago. Eventually, he returned to his mother's house because he didn't get along with his stepmother. Matt became, according to his mother, "a street child." Uninterested in school, he began to hang out with white street gangs, she recalled, until he discovered the J.D.L. and found religion. "He just looked for some authority, someone who would tell him how to live, who would tell him what to do, someone who would decide for him what was good and what was bad," she told the Israeli publication *Koteret Rashit* when she was in Jerusalem for her son's trial. "He was very restless."

Liebowitz says he discovered Kahane and the J.D.L. when he read Kahane's Jewish militant manifesto, *Never Again*. The book's title, which became the J.D.L.'s rallying cry, was a warning that Jews will never again be led like sheep to the slaughter. The message was meant as much for passive, liberal-minded Jews as it was for gentiles. "I read *Never Again* and it hit me right in the heart," said Liebowitz. "I found what I was looking for." His first illegal act that was inspired by Kahane's philosophy, he said, was to place a homemade bomb under the car of Arthur Butz, an engineering professor at Northwestern University. Butz had written a book in 1978 claiming the Holocaust was the hoax of the twentieth century. "The bomb never went off," recalls Liebowitz. "I learned how to make it from a book by Abbie Hoffman."

Liebowitz was soon studying in a yeshiva and working out with members of the small but violent J.D.L. chapter in Chicago. "I started training with sticks, knives, hand-to-hand combat. We were trained by a guy who was a Navy SEAL. . . . It was cool for a 14-year-old high school freshman to see Jews do this stuff. Even though most of the J.D.L. members weren't religious, they put on *kippos* whenever they fought anti-Semites. I hung out in neighborhoods where everyone was fighting, so it took a lot to impress me. The J.D.L. really impressed me!"

But Kahane impressed Liebowitz even more than the street fighting. The pied piper of confused Jewish youth, Kahane has a knack for convincing youngsters that violence in the name of Greater Israel or Soviet Jewry is heroic in the tradition of the Bible. "I got to know Kahane when he came to Chicago in 1979. I thought he was it. He had unbelievable charisma. I came to him for advice and guidance and depending on his answer I would have switched schools or made major changes in my life."

Shortly after meeting Kahane, Liebowitz moved to Israel to be with the fiery rabbi. At the time, Kahane was a political pariah in Israel with no more than a few dozen young followers from the United States. Like many American Jews who arrive in Israel for the first time, Liebowitz was shocked that Israeli Jews bore such little cultural resemblance to the Jews he left behind. This fast-paced, chaotic and intense new world on the Mediterranean was both strange and a little frightening. "I am at an *ulpan* [an intensive, Hebrew-language training institute]," he wrote his mother soon after arriving in Israel. "We sing Chanukah songs. . . . I had to leave the room because the songs reminded me of you and I long for you so much. . . . I did not realize it would be so difficult."

There was little time, however, for reflection when one's days and nights were devoted to Kahane. There were almost daily vigilante attacks against Arabs, Christian missionaries, Black Hebrews, Israeli Communists and other leftists whom Kahane viewed as enemies. Liebowitz gained a reputation inside the J.D.L. as one of Kahane's most dedicated "crazies." "Kahane was asked by a reporter why he had so many crazies around him," Liebowitz recalled. "He replied that he needed crazies because they were the first to cross the barricades. Everybody in the J.D.L. joked that I was the crazy Kahane was talking about."

In 1980, burned out from the frantic militant activity, Liebowitz borrowed money from his mother and returned to Chicago. He jumped from yeshiva to yeshiva before he moved to New York City, where the J.D.L. has its national headquarters. The J.D.L., which had claimed as many as 10,000 members in 1970, was by the early 1980s a shell of its former self—without Kahane's charismatic presence, it foundered, breaking into small, competing factions. Kahane milked the organization for publicity and money for his affiliated Kach Party in Israel. By the time Liebowitz arrived in New York, the J.D.L. had just a few dozen hard-core activists in New York and Los Angeles.

During a brief revival in 1981, however, the J.D.L. began a paramilitary training camp in the Catskills, similar to the one it had run during its heyday a decade earlier. Matt was one of some fifty youths who spent the summer training with automatic weapons and in martial arts. "Matt was a sweet, good-hearted kid," recalled Gary Moskowitz, a New York City policeman who was the J.D.L. camp karate instructor. "He loved training. He used to run ten miles a day. But he was easily manipulated and extremely prone to violence."

Liebowitz rose to become the head of J.D.L. security during a period when the organization was implicated in a number of terrorist attacks, including the bombings of Soviet and Arab diplomatic missions in New York and the firebombing of an Arab-owned restaurant in Brooklyn in which a woman was killed. During the summer of Israel's 1982 invasion of Lebanon, armed J.D.L. militants raided the Manhattan offices of the November 29th Coalition, a pro-Palestine Liberation Organization group. A week later, the J.D.L. training loft at the intersection of West 34th Street and Broadway in Manhattan was bombed. A J.D.L.

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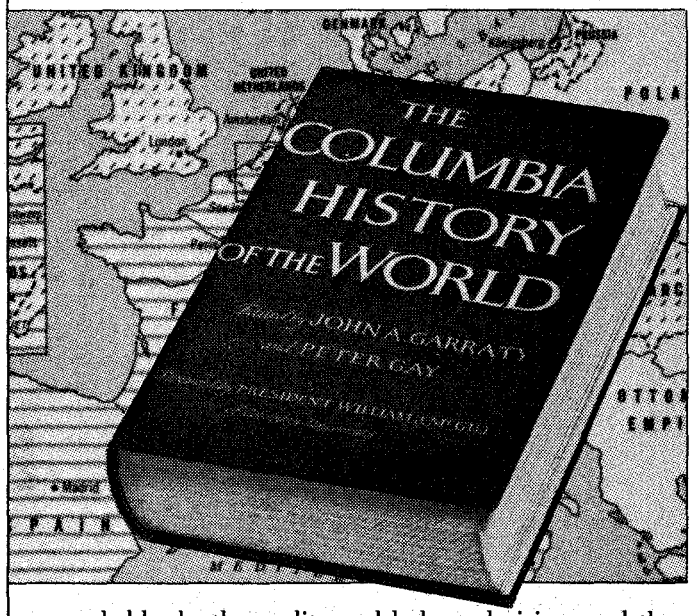

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security guard asleep inside narrowly avoided injury. "It was a crazy summer," Liebowitz recalled. "The camp produced fifty good, dedicated J.D.L. people who would prowl the streets of New York at night in search of Arab or Russian victims. That summer there were twelve to fifteen bombings. We had an underground bomb lab in a house in Borough Park crammed with explosives, Tommy guns, Uzis. . . . We knew a grand jury was investigating us and that Federal indictments were coming down. Then one of our people was arrested in Israel for shooting a West Bank Arab and was convicted and went to prison. We were very bummed out by that."

As a Federal grand jury weighed indictments against a number of J.D.L. militants, about forty suspects, including Liebowitz, suddenly moved to Israel in the winter of 1983. According to a Federal law-enforcement agent involved in the J.D.L. probe, that effectively stymied the investigation. Weary of police investigations, Liebowitz tried to keep away from Kahane and his followers in Israel. He moved to a military base in the Negev to work as a volunteer. "It is wonderful to be in my country," he wrote his mother. "There is some poetic justice in this scene of lighting the Chanukah candles in a military base in the Negev. It is a dramatic scene. The sun shines softly and religious soldiers light a large menorah and say prayers. I am at home. I have never felt better in my whole life in any other place."

A few weeks after Liebowitz wrote his mother, a bomb planted by the P.L.O. in the back of a bus in Jerusalem exploded, killing several passengers, including two young Jewish girls. "I feel as if I had lost my own sisters," he wrote in another letter home. "I can't stand this. . . . I am very upset. . . . Jews are dying here only because they want to live here. . . . I must see Rabbi Kahane."

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But Liebowitz got mixed signals from Kahane. On one hand, he says Kahane told him not to do anything illegal and risk going to jail. However, he said Kahane also constantly preached that vengeance is holy. "The bombing of the [Jewish] bus was like a sign," Liebowitz told me. "I knew what road I had to take. I swore I was going to avenge Jewish blood." Liebowitz says he met four other Kach Party members from the United States who, like him, itched to strike back at the Arabs. Craig Leitner, whose father is a top official with the New York City Board of Education, was responsible for co-planning the attack. Liebowitz went to Kahane for money to finance the operation without telling him what they were planning. "I said, 'We need money fast,'" Liebowitz recalled. "Kahane took $600 from his pocket and gave it to me without asking any questions."

Prior to the attack, Leitner wrote Rafi Medoff, a J.D.L. official in New York , that when he received a collect phone call from a "Mr. Gray," it would be a signal to phone the Israeli media with the news that a Jewish terrorist organization had machine-gunned an Arab bus. The Kach kids were arrested minutes after Leitner placed the call to Medoff. Liebowitz claims he learned during police interrogation that Shin Beth (Israel's F.B.I.) had been surveilling them for twenty-four hours prior to the shooting.

Kahane hired an attorney for his young colleagues and visited them on a fairly regular basis in prison. He appointed one of the youths imprisoned with Liebowitz, Yehuda Richter, who is from an upper-middle-class home in Beverly Hills, to be his chief deputy in Kach. Craig Leitner, who turned state's witness, fled from Israeli custody and was later arrested by U.S. marshals at the White Plains, New York, campus of Pace University Law School, where he was studying. He returned to Israel after lengthy legal maneuvering, served a year in prison and is reportedly once again a college student in New York.

Liebowitz now says the machine-gun attack was a cathartic experience and that he is grateful that confinement in prison gave him the personal discipline he lacked. After spending more than two years in prison, he returned to the United States in 1986 to promote *aliya* (emigration to Israel) as an emissary of the Eretz Yisrael Movement, which is affiliated with Gush Emunim. He is currently working for a Manhattan-based security firm. Recently, he helped install a security system for the Albanian mission to the United Nations.

Next summer, Liebowitz plans to move to Israel permanently. His wife, Judy, a 23-year-old nurse, would prefer to live in a quiet Jerusalem neighborhood and raise a family. He wants to move to the fiercely nationalist Palestinian West Bank city of Hebron, where ultranationalist Jews have carved a small enclave in the heart of the city's casbah. Violent clashes between settlers and Palestinians in Hebron are an almost daily occurrence.

Liebowitz says Kahane's radical philosophy continues to guide him. "I think the Arabs should be moved out of Israel," he says, echoing Kahane. "My parents can't believe that the bus attack had anything to do with ideology. They still think it happened because they got a divorce," he said, laughing softly. □

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CHINESE-AMERICAN POLITICS

A Silent Minority Tests Its Clout

PETER KWONG AND JOANN LUM

In his office, which is decorated with Chinese artifacts, Delaware Lieutenant Governor S.B. Woo speaks proudly of holding the highest elected office of any Chinese in the United States. "In some ways I'm a pioneer," he says. He may continue to be one, as a candidate for the U.S. Senate this year, but Woo will have company. Most Americans will notice, for the first time, the names of Chinese-Americans like Woo, Hsieh and Chen on their election ballots, an indication of the increase of Chinese-American participation in electoral politics.

In the past, the Chinese were a silent minority, mostly interested in politics that concerned their home country. But that has changed since the 1965 immigration act eliminated quotas on the Chinese. As their population has increased, from 237,292 in 1960 to more than 1 million in 1985, Chinese-Americans are no longer willing to be ignored. As Lily Chen, former Mayor of Monterey Park, California, observes, "When our grandparents came to America, they came as sojourners. Now . . . we are here to stay. We're Americans. And we have to be part of the political process."

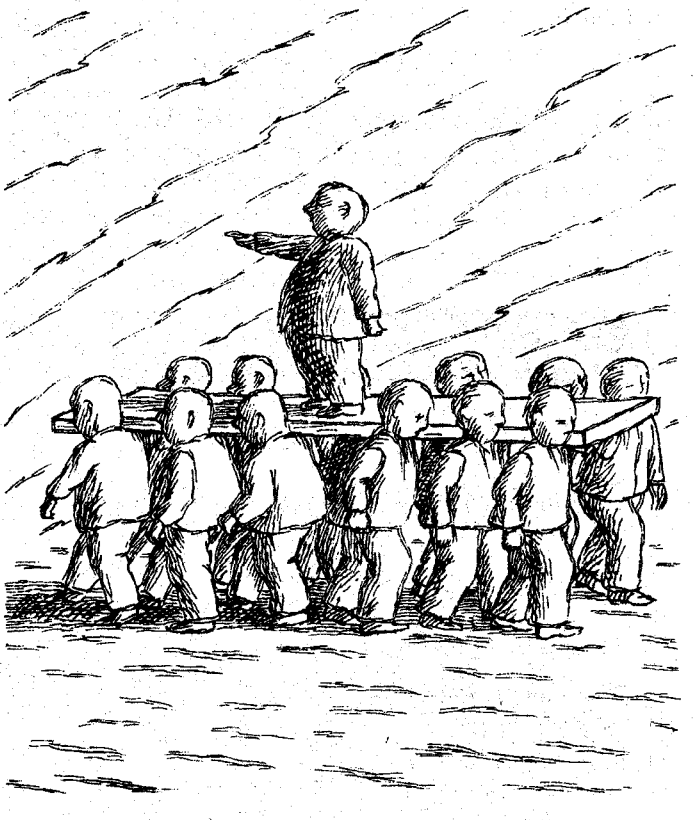
By the mid-1980s, a few Chinese-Americans held elected office, the most prominent among them S.B. Woo, California Secretary of State March Fong Eu, Los Angeles City Councilman Michael Woo and Oregon State Senator Mae Yih. Now many are entering new electoral races—a half dozen on the West Coast alone—including Lily Chen, who may run for Congress, and Thomas Hsieh, who expects to run to keep the Board of Supervisors seat in San Francisco to which he was appointed by Mayor Dianne Feinstein. Others are vying for local positions as judges, school board members and delegates to party conventions.

Chinese-American involvement in electoral politics is in such an early phase that statistics on voting patterns are hard to come by. The total Chinese population is small; many are recent immigrants who do not speak English and are not familiar with the rudiments of American politics; some are not citizens and do not care to be; many of those who are citizens do not register to vote; and few actually go to the polling place. For instance, a 1985 survey by the New York Chinatown Voter Education Alliance counted only 5,846 registered voters with Chinese surnames out of a Chinatown population estimated to be more than 100,000. According to the Chinese press, actual turnout in that area during the 1984 general elections was about 3,000; in recent off-year elections, it has been approximately 1,500.

An additional problem for Chinese-Americans is the fragmented nature of their community. They come from Hong Kong, the People's Republic of China, Southeast Asia and Taiwan. Those who were living in this country before the 1950s are mainly working-class. They are very different from those who came after the collapse of the Nationalist government in China, when thousands of refugees, mostly professionals, were admitted. The 1965 immigration act further polarized the community by its preference for two distinct groups: highly educated professionals and the relatives of Chinese-Americans already living here, most of whom came from humble rural backgrounds, often did not speak English and lacked marketable skills. Members of the former group generally live outside of concentrated Chinese communities and speak Mandarin, while those in the latter usually reside in Chinatowns and speak Cantonese.

Politics in Chinese-American communities has long been divided along the lines of partisan strife in China. In the early 1950s, the U.S. support for the Nationalist (Kuomintang) government in Taiwan and the influence of the Republican Party–backed China lobby strengthened the conservative elite in Chinese communities. Those sympathetic to the People's Republic of China were silenced. Today, with the improved relationship between China and the United States and with most immigrants intending to settle permanently in this country, the Chinese are less involved in partisan politics in China.

Still, the legacy of the past complicates Chinese-Americans' party affiliation in the United States. The Chinese community establishment—mostly landlords and small-business owners—remains identified with the Republican Party, but working people and American-born Chinese generally align with the Democrats. Chinese-American



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politicians, then, cannot count on a unified Chinese-American voter base to get elected. In San Francisco, for example, there are proportionally more Chinese (15 percent of the population) than in any other major city in the continental United States, but they represent only 6 percent of the registered voters and they are split, 60 percent Democrat and 40 percent Republican. It is no wonder that not one Chinese has been elected to the eleven-member Board of Supervisors (although Hsieh was appointed).

Chinese-Americans have been pushed on by a rising tide of minority consciousness inspired by the civil rights movement. For March Fong Eu, this ethnic unity is pervasive and can override party loyalty: "Chinese-Americans . . . identify with their roots." She continues, confidently, "Chinese-Americans will vote for me, there's no question about that. They will even cross party lines to vote for me." In a similar spirit, many Chinese-Americans feel that only fellow Chinese can fully understand and represent them. A group of well-known Chinese, led by S.B. Woo and Anna Chennault, a longtime supporter of the Taiwanese Nationalist government, has launched a nonpartisan campaign to pressure presidential candidates to promise that if elected, they will appoint at least three Chinese-Americans to policy-making positions.

Chinese-Americans, particularly the professionals, will even contribute to Chinese-American candidates who are not running in their districts. For example, one possible candidate for the House of Representatives raised $70,000, nearly all from Chinese-Americans, in a recent visit to a state far from the one she hopes to represent. She says, "The enthusiasm may not be because of me, but people think that after 120 years [of Chinese presence in this country], it's about time that we have a Chinese-American in the House of Representatives." S.B. Woo has also been raising campaign funds from Chinese-Americans across the country, as had March Fong Eu before she dropped out of the Senate race. Woo has raised more than $250,000 in the past year, about 70 percent of that from Chinese-Americans outside his home state.

Although thousands of Chinese-American dollars have gone into the campaigns of these Chinese-American politicians, the results have been disappointing. Woo, for instance, favors working within the system in the least threatening manner and shies away from issues around which Chinese-American communities have been mobilizing. Rather than involve himself in the Vincent Chin case (the killing of a Chinese-American in Detroit by two whites who mistook him for a Japanese, whom they blame for the auto industry crisis), Woo says that he prefers working for the appointment of a Chinese-American to the U.S. Civil Rights Commission. Woo chooses this kind of tactic over that of "concentrating our energies . . . on so-called celebrated cases. . . . I detect among young Asian-Americans the tendency to copy after the thoughts and action patterns of black Americans and Spanish-Americans along the lines of vociferous opposition. . . . But in order for every minority to be effective, each should use its own unique characteristics. Asians are smaller in number. But our educational level is much higher. Financially, we're better off. Our cultural base is that we're patient, we're deep thinkers."

Other Chinese-American politicians have been accused of opportunistically using their ethnicity to further their political careers. In 1986, Dorothy Chin Brandt, in a primary campaign for civil court judge in Manhattan (a seat she won in November 1987), invoked the positive images of Chinese-Americans—hardworking, dependable, deserving—to win non-Asian votes. And she played up the idea that Chinese-Americans should be represented by one of their own, although her work in the Chinese-American community had been marginal. To many Chinese-Americans, her candidacy raised the question of whether to support a Chinese-American solely as a symbol of ethnic solidarity. Margaret Fung, executive director of the Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund, said she had supported Chin Brandt with reservations: "Her actual involvement in Asian-American issues had not been that great. But her point was that there was no Asian-American elected official citywide." In the 1986 primary elections the Chinese-American vote was small, but Chin Brandt claims to have won 99 percent of it.

This kind of ethnic-centered electoral politics so far has not been beneficial to the working-class Chinese. New immigrants living in Chinatown ghettos enter the underground economy as waiters or as seamstresses in sweatshops. They work more than sixty hours a week, are paid less than minimum wage, receive no overtime pay and have no job security. Chinatown families live in crowded, run-down, crime-ridden and high-rent areas. These Chinese need protection against their employers and landlords, who are usually also Chinese and who use the idea of ethnic solidarity to keep the Chinese working class down. "We need to stick together," the bosses say, "so let's not argue among ourselves and let the whites get our business." The middle-class Chinese who enter politics are more interested in affirmative action and Chinese representation on boards and commissions than in basic work and housing issues. As Russell Leong, editor of *Amerasia Journal* of the Asian-American Studies Center at the University of California, Los Angeles, points out: "Asian-American politicians are mostly from the middle class and upper middle class. Whose class interests do they represent?"

Would a Chinese-American politician by definition be more sensitive to and effective in representing the interests of his or her Chinese constituency? This issue was played out in 1985 in a primary race for a City Council seat in New York City, in which a Chinese-American, Virginia Kee, challenged the seat of incumbent Miriam Friedlander. The district included a large section of Chinatown. Many Chinese liked the idea of having a fellow Chinese up for election; however, others took issue with Kee's weak stand against real estate speculation in Chinatown. Friedlander, on the other hand, had a record as a dedicated advocate for the community, especially strong in fighting against gentrification.

This debate over development is symptomatic of a problem affecting many other Chinese communities. Investors and speculators in the Far East have been pouring money into real estate in these communities, contributing to a housing

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crisis and the enormous pressures on small businesses and industries in Chinatowns. During the New York City Council campaign, Kee played down the real estate issue and tried instead to stress her Chinese identity. She says, "The Chinese constituency understood that this was a race involving a Chinese-American and they wanted me to win." But only about 20 percent of eligible voters in the Chinatown community went to the polls, according to the Chinese press; Kee did not receive the overwhelming majority she sought, and she lost. Friedlander said ethnicity was a secondary issue: "The Mayor [Ed Koch] picked someone to run against me not because she was Asian but because she was someone who followed his principles." This race also illustrates how supporting a Chinese-American simply on the basis of ethnicity risks tokenism.

Chinese-Americans are beginning to agree that they need to form coalitions with other groups. They disagree, however, over whether to ally with "mainstream" whites or with minorities. James Hsiung, professor of politics at New York University, for instance, contends that "we can compete with the mainstream on merits. . . . If we pound on the ethnic issue, we remind our white colleagues to be ethnic-conscious. We want them to forget about ethnicity."

Grass-roots organizers, on the other hand, are mobilizing community support to work on specific Chinese-American problems that lead to broader issues shared by other minorities and working-class people. With the support of other groups, these Chinese-Americans are confronting the power structure in the Chinese community: Housing advocates are fighting against zoning-law changes and high-rise developments supported by Chinese real estate interests; union activists are organizing against Chinese restaurant and factory owners to combat violations of labor laws and improve conditions in the sweatshops.

Coalition building has forced minority groups to re-examine ethnic stereotypes perpetuated by the white society. Blacks have often thought of Asians as opportunistic and favored by whites, while Asians have regarded blacks as menacing and underachieving.

Historical enmity still haunts Asians' perceptions of one another; there remains animosity between some Chinese and Japanese as a result of the Sino-Japanese War. Vietnamese and Chinese resent each other because of the expulsion of ethnic Chinese—the boat people—from Vietnam. Chinese, Japanese, Filipinos, Koreans and Vietnamese often live or work in separate enclaves, which makes it even harder for them to form coalitions. Although Asian professionals have been able to share common goals like greater political representation and affirmative action, working people have been less successful in uniting around issues.

So far, coalitions have been limited to specific issues and local campaigns. Blacks and Asians are joining forces on lower-income housing; Latinos and Asians are targeting bilingual education and immigration issues; and Asians are addressing anti-Asian violence and alleged discriminatory quotas at universities. Jesse Jackson's Rainbow Coalition is another example of this kind of alliance. Some Asians took part in Jackson's 1984 presidential campaign and are gearing up for this year's election. Cindy Ng, member of the national board of directors of the Rainbow Coalition, explains why Chinese-Americans got involved: "We were for Jackson because he was a good representative of minority issues, including Asian issues. He took our issues to the national level." Chinese-Americans are realizing that as part of the fastest-growing minority in this country, they can powerfully influence American politics and sensibilities. At the same time, they are beginning to learn that to achieve these goals, they must work with others. □

THE COLA FREEZE

Social Security Is for Everybody

JOHN L. HESS

On December 31, Americans on Social Security received a cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) of 4.2 percent. This was only their due under the law, yet it represented a triumph of truth and fair play over a campaign of disinformation and bias involving virtually all the media.

There was a serious push in the media for a freeze or a lid on the COLA, but no public debate. News reports, editorials and commentaries concluded unanimously that cowardly politicians had finally bowed to an affluent "special interest," the elderly, in a greedy grab that would worsen the budget deficit. This view has been drummed in so thoroughly and for so long that a distinguished liberal columnist, defending his support for a Social Security freeze, wrote me: "I am against locking in, anywhere, the principle that one sector of the community is to be immunized against inflation. . . . COLAs are an injustice to most of the community."

This cockeyed notion that Social Security concerns only a minority—and an affluent minority, at that—is the keystone of a conservative campaign that has been waged for at least a decade. Actually, Social Security covers very nearly the entire population. By 1984 it was providing pensions to 91 percent of the elderly, representing more than half the income of two-thirds of them and virtually all the income of one-fourth of them.

Ignored in the discussion is the fact that Social Security is also the major pension resource for the population now at work, so a freeze or cut in the COLA affects the pensions of all, including those of the youngest workers and their children. Indeed, it affects the young much more than the old, since COLAs are compounded year by year. Thus, the six-month freeze that was imposed by the fraudulent Social Security "crisis" of 1983 cost the average pensioner a mere $84 a year (against a pension of $4,992), but the annual lost

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payment was $126 by the end of 1987. Today's elderly will be long gone while that gap in the COLA continues to widen for the present generation, and still further for future ones. So much for the vaunted "generational inequity" of Social Security.

Another key claim in the propaganda campaign is that the elderly are now better off than other age groups as a whole. Going by the averages, which, as a government analyst remarked, "mask a lot of reality," the elderly *are* a bit better off—thanks to Social Security! According to the Census Bureau, the median income for an individual over 65 years of age was $10,170 in 1984 ($13,460 for a couple). Social Security contributed 38 percent of that income and private pensions 6 percent. According to a study by the Social Security Administration, 14 percent of the elderly were below the poverty line; but without Social Security, 50 percent would have been down there.

Proposals to remove this safety net, which lifts 36 percent of the elderly from official poverty, recall Sholom Aleichem's tale of the villagers of Chelm. They erected a railing along a precipice but then, observing that nobody was falling off the cliff anymore, they took it down.

The main reason the elderly, as a group, look relatively better off is, of course, the COLA. Social Security is indexed for inflation, whereas welfare—the alternative for many—is not indexed, and the minimum wage has been frozen at $3.35 an hour since 1981. The obvious response of a just and compassionate society would be to restore the buying power of welfare and of wages. Instead, the media consensus calls for a lid on Social Security—to restore a measure of equity!

Now, it is true that some 3 percent of the elderly in the 1984 study had incomes above $50,000 and would not really suffer if Social Security was abolished. This no doubt helps to explain why mediacrats can contemplate the prospect with equanimity. But the vision of masses of the idle rich living it up on Social Security has been as effective a propaganda ploy as President Reagan's welfare lady in the Cadillac. It has, for example, allowed commentators to argue plausibly that Social Security pensions should become fully taxable income. (Up to half is now taxable for those of moderate or high incomes; the other half is exempt on the ground that the beneficiary paid income tax on his or her half of the premiums when they were paid in.) But beware when conservatives call for soaking the rich. Their goal is to make Social Security less attractive to all who have incomes of $30,000 or more, and hence to make it politically more vulnerable. To divide beneficiaries according to their resources undermines the central purpose of Social Security, which is to provide a pension that has been earned as a matter of right—yes, as an entitlement.

The most powerful argument for putting a lid on the COLA, and perhaps the most flagrantly dishonest one, has been that of poverty—the nation's poverty, that is. With a budget deficit threatening to sink the economy, it is held that we cannot afford this profligacy toward the elderly.

What none of the mediacrats acknowledge is that Social Security has never cost the Treasury a penny. On the contrary, it runs a surplus and substantially reduces the deficit. In 1987, to be specific, its pension trust funds took in about $20 billion more than they paid out. It is estimated that the surplus this year will be $39 billion to $45 billion, well more than the total of deficit-reduction measures that the White House and Congress were squabbling over.

Actually, Social Security is an independent, self-financed insurance system. Its accounts were kept separate from the Federal budget until Lyndon Johnson merged them, in order to minimize the deficit swollen by the Vietnam War. The trust funds also helped finance that war, both as a source of loans to the Treasury and because military personnel were granted Social Security earnings credit without charge.

Congress periodically repays the trust funds for those service credits and other minor debts, but it owed somewhere between $20 billion and $30 billion at the time of the great Social Security "crisis" of 1982-83. These assets were ignored while a big push was mounted to persuade the country that Social Security was going broke.

President Reagan proposed a major cutback in Social Security soon after his inauguration in 1981 and was slapped down in Congress; the move hurt the G.O.P. badly in the 1982 elections. Overnight, the President became the staunch defender of Social Security. He said the trust funds would run out in 1983 (actually, they held at about $22 billion all through the year, not counting the money owed them by Congress), and he named a bipartisan "rescue" commission headed by Alan Greenspan, then merely a Wall Street forecaster.

Greenspan worked up a worst-case scenario assuming high inflation and unemployment and produced a prediction that the funds would run from $150 billion to $200 billion in the red by 1990. He assumed, for example, that the

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consumer price index would rise 9.2 percent in 1985. At the time, the White House economic advisers were predicting a rise less than half as great and Greenspan himself was telling his corporate clients it would be about one-third that much. The actual increase was 3.6 percent. But by the time that was known the great "rescue" of 1983 had gone into effect with the virtually unanimous approval of Congress, the media and, incredibly, organized labor.

The "rescue" act not only killed six months of the COLA but also introduced a two-tier system for Federal and private workers, promising that the younger generation would pay higher withholding taxes and receive lower benefits than their elders, with the retirement age to be phased up from 65 to 67 in the first three decades of the next century. Recently, the egregious William F. Buckley Jr. had the audacity to cite this outrage, perpetrated by his own party, as an argument against Social Security itself. Which is precisely what the generational-equity gang has been plotting all along.

The propagandists often complain that new retirees get back all the money they have paid in within one, two or two and a half years (depending on who is sounding off), implying that from then on, pensioners become parasites on the back of the working class. This ignores the employers' matching contributions, interest on past taxes paid and inflation. But the argument is an absurdity to begin with.

If your house burns down, you should surely recover more than your insurance premiums. The balance is paid by policyholders who don't have fires. Premiums are scaled to cover expected needs. The fact that Social Security has operated for nearly fifty years without missing a payment suggests that its premiums—the payroll taxes—have been adequate.

There is in fact no principled reason why payroll taxes should carry all the load. When the Social Security Act was adopted in 1935, it was contemplated that general revenues might also be tapped, as is the practice in some countries with more generous social security programs. Instead, we have steadily increased withholding taxes, the most regressive ones on our books. In a further shifting of the burden downward, Congress is about to enact a catastrophic-illness plan that will be financed entirely by the elderly themselves, out of their Social Security checks.

The proposal to reduce the budget deficit by capping Social Security pensions should be understood as an effort to transfer the tax burden, still more, from the upper to the middle and lower brackets. It would avoid confronting the main causes of the deficit: the great leveling off of the income tax and the great buildup of military spending, both adopted with bipartisan complicity.

None of the above fairly evident truths reached the public on television or in the press. The mass of young and middle-aged workers showed no visible reaction, pro or con, to the drive to clip their pensions again. President Reagan nevertheless refused to sign on unless the Democrats formally proposed it, and the Democrats, after wavering, finally said no, following the arrival of millions of petitions from the elderly. Alone though they were, these petitioners saved the COLA. It was, I repeat, a great victory for truth and fair play. □

Star Wars

(*Continued From Front Cover*)

mentarians from the NATO countries, concluded: "If the U.S. Administration is determined to put the realization of its total S.D.I. program before everything else, the current tensions within the Alliance . . . are likely to increase rather than diminish."

While many Americans were initially intoxicated by the sweep and boldness of S.D.I., most European leaders were shocked by the idea. The entire concept of S.D.I., challenging the traditional doctrine of deterrence, bordered on military heresy. Former NATO Supreme Allied Commander Gen. Bernard Rogers, in Lisbon for the organization's annual meeting, jumped off his hotel room couch with astonishment when he heard Reagan's televised announcement of the initiative. European involvement in S.D.I. was an afterthought; given forty-eight hours to review Reagan's speech, Secretary of State George Shultz hastily inserted a clause calling for "consultation" with the allies. Otherwise, there was no indication that Reagan was aware he was standing strategic doctrine on its head—or that this might concern the allies. "We didn't care about the Europeans at all then," says Hugh DiSantis, formerly with the policy planning staff of the State Department.

The strength of European opposition across the political spectrum, however, made ignoring the allies impossible. Still reeling from mass protests over the installation of the cruise and Pershing 2 missiles, British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and West Germany's Defense Minister at the time, Manfred Wörner (recently named Secretary General of NATO), denounced the baroque character of S.D.I. and the insensitivity of Reagan's timing. Claude Cheysson, then the French Foreign Minister, urged the United States to drop the idea of a "Maginot line in space." Wörner declared that Star Wars could destroy NATO. The bruising battle to deploy the Euromissiles had been to "couple" Western defenses; now, S.D.I. would mean decoupling them. Skeptics argued that if the United States could make itself safe from nuclear attack, it would be reluctant to use its power, nuclear or conventional, to defend Europe. France, Denmark, Norway and Greece all announced their outright opposition to any cooperation with the Pentagon over S.D.I.

In early 1985, Washington began a sales drive to turn European opinion around—a move intended mainly for domestic political purposes. "The Reagan Administration had to show support from the allies to get Congressional support for the project," says Peter Sharfman, who conducted a study on S.D.I. for the Office of Technology Assessment. DiSantis adds candidly, "Our intention in talking to the Europeans was to manage them."

InterNation is an international consortium of publications and journalists, producing investigative stories on subjects that cross national boundaries. Daniel Charles contributed research to this article from Washington.

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Like a band of tin men, the Administration's sales force, including Under Secretary of Defense Fred Iklé, Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Policy Richard Perle, Lieut. Gen. James Abrahamson and Caspar Weinberger, hit the capitals of Europe. Combining classic military showmanship with implied threats and bribes, they aimed to create an irreversible momentum for S.D.I. The sales job involved creating two quite different images of the project, one for domestic and the other for foreign consumption. In the United States, S.D.I. was the "Astrodome," the umbrella that would protect the population and introduce an era free from the threat of nuclear weapons. The Pentagon depicted it to the Europeans, however, as little more than advanced research into a new defense system for military sites, which would add muscle to the doctrine of deterrence. Says one British diplomat stationed in Washington, "As long as it could be presented as an effort to strengthen deterrence and not weaken it, they figured that people in Europe would support S.D.I."

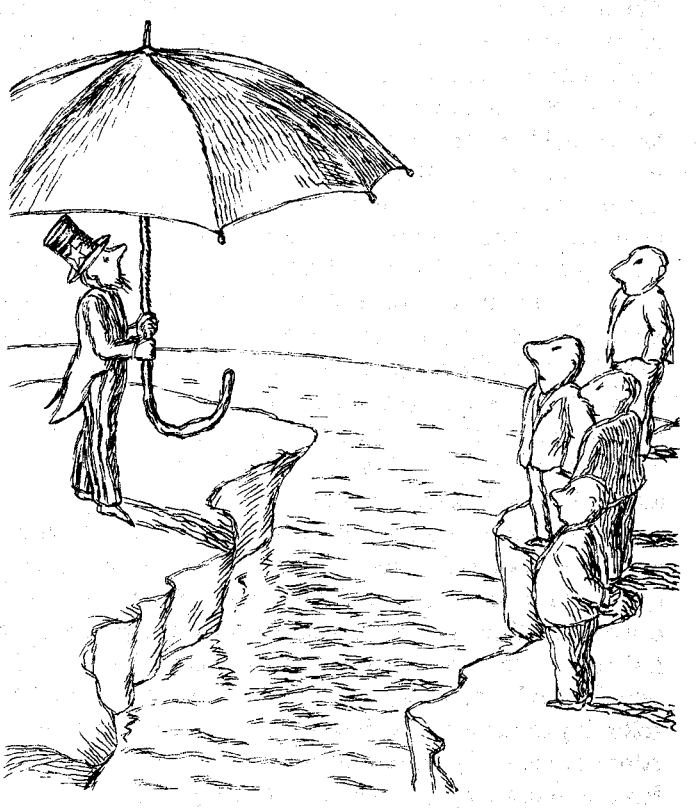
The Administration also played heavily on European fears of a new kind of U.S. isolationism, one based on military supremacy in space. As early as July 1984, Iklé threatened European leaders: halt their public criticism of S.D.I. or face an anti-European backlash in the United States. Two years later, the message came even more forcefully from Perle. According to the minutes of a closed meeting held on June 18, 1986, Perle stunned members of the European Parliament visiting the Defense Department by telling them that "though politically, economically and ideologically important . . . Europe was strategically of reduced interest. In technical military terms, Europe was dispensable." According to one participant in the meeting, Perle's message was clear: surrender to U.S. leadership or face declining support for U.S. defense commitments to Europe.

One former State Department official described the effort as a "combination of beating [the Europeans] over the head with a stick while waving a carrot." It was to mollify fears of a Fortress America that one of President Reagan's early S.D.I. study panels floated the idea of providing the allies with their own version of Star Wars, a missile defense system to protect Western Europe against incoming Soviet short- and intermediate-range weapons. Soon dubbed the European Defense Initiative (E.D.I.), the plan helped soften the objections of German Defense Minister Wörner, who saw it as the European wedge into NATO. "It was through E.D.I. that the Pentagon tried to get Europeans supportive of S.D.I.," comments Martin McCusker, director of the Military Committee of the North Atlantic Assembly. "Even if they didn't believe in the concept, they'd get their own European system."

Yet skepticism remained; in April 1985 the allies unanimously rejected Caspar Weinberger's demand that they commit themselves to S.D.I. within sixty days. Something else was clearly needed: the promise of money. General Abrahamson, head of the Strategic Defense Initiative Organization and a man regarded by his colleagues as a superb salesman, flew to Europe armed with briefing books, threat assessments and science-fiction-style audiovisuals. In his wake, says Bernhard Zepter, a former counselor to the NATO Nuclear Planning Group, "there was the sense that money was going to start falling like a soft rain." Abrahamson's appeal was echoed by Weinberger, who suggested during a December 1985 trip to West Germany that S.D.I. contracts might bring more than $1 billion to European industry.

"Weinberger realized the Europeans' sensitivity to the prospect of being left behind by U.S. high-tech programs, and played that card," says DiSantis. In a confidential letter written in March 1986, the Secretary of Defense urged German Economic Minister Martin Bangemann to give government support to companies that wished to work with the Pentagon on S.D.I. He wrote, "I know I need not emphasize the point that the extent to which German participants are the beneficiaries of assistance may be decisive in establishing and maintaining the competitiveness of German industries, research establishments and other entities."

The carrot-and-stick approach worked, at least temporarily. Britain was the first to sign an agreement on S.D.I. with the United States, called a memorandum of understanding, or M.O.U. This occurred in December 1985, after Margaret Thatcher had obtained four concessions on Reagan's part. Thatcher's Four Points, as they came to be known, involved: framing S.D.I. as a reinforcement of deterrence; maintaining the restraints of the ABM treaty, which severely confine S.D.I. testing; limiting the project to research only; and consulting with the allies before any moves are made toward deployment. Even with those provisos, British support for S.D.I. sparked a fierce Cabinet debate and a wave of protest in the scientific community. A top official of the government's biggest civilian high-tech research program, ALVEY, resigned, and hundreds of British scientists refused to work on any project associated with S.D.I.



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West Germany and Italy in turn signed memorandums of understanding in March and September 1986, in each case after bitter internal debates. Only intensive lobbying from industrialists overcame opposition from within Chancellor Helmut Kohl's coalition. In Italy, according to S. Peter Worden, former special assistant to General Abrahamson, Bettino Craxi's government saw participation in S.D.I. as a status symbol reflecting Italy's new position as one of the top five economic powers. Outside of Europe, Japan and Israel signed on.

All these memorandums of understanding set forth procedures for industrial cooperation and new controls over the exchange of classified information, and listed technologies that might be provided by foreign contractors to the Star Wars effort. They contained no guarantees of funds for these overseas contractors, however. And each agreement was declared "secret in perpetuity."

Rather than endorse the long-range goal of an integrated missile defense, the signatories were lining up to exploit the short-term research possibilities advertised by the Pentagon. "None of the countries," says one Congressional source, "ever bought the line that S.D.I. would contribute to Western security." Indeed, many European officials felt that cooperating would give them leverage in Washington to restrain the project from expanding into its more fantastic dimensions.

NATO, too, remained ambivalent, endorsing S.D.I. only after a vigorous lobbying effort by George Shultz and his arms negotiator Paul Nitze, who promised that all research would be bound by a strict interpretation of the ABM treaty. "The Administration is always saying, Look, NATO supports S.D.I.," comments Martin McCusker. "Well, that's not quite true. NATO never supported unlimited testing and development of S.D.I., and NATO's statements are always couched with caveats on using this for negotiations and research only." But European signatures on the memorandums of understanding were enough to give a veneer of allied unity, and when the Defense Department went to Congress in the spring of 1986, it came away with its biggest research and development grant yet, $3.5 billion.

Almost before the ink was dry on the allied agreements, the Reagan Administration began violating the promises that had induced the Europeans to support the project. In December 1986, President Reagan began to push for a broader interpretation of the ABM treaty to allow for wide-ranging S.D.I. tests, despite the unanimous opposition of NATO member countries; Weinberger did not consult with the allies before announcing last February that certain elements of S.D.I. were being accelerated past the research stage to insure early deployment; and despite Abrahamson's flowery proclamations of U.S.-European cooperation, his organization has done little to protect European interests in the competition for Star Wars contracts.

The man who best illustrates Europe's current predicament is Stanley Orman, head of the British S.D.I. Participation Office. With a staff of twenty-seven and an annual budget of $750,000, Orman directs the most ambitious effort yet to take the Pentagon's call for U.S.-European cooperation at face value.

Each morning, when Orman arrives at his office in the Ministry of Defense, he proceeds according to two schedules: The hands of his black-and-gold Pulsar wristwatch tick off London time, while a digital readout shows him the time in Washington. A flamboyant, jovial figure, Orman is the middleman between Britain's defense establishment and the Pentagon, and since his appointment, in March 1986, he has spent as much as a third of his time in the United States.

Thus far, Orman has little to show for his labors. Describing his early days on the job, he sounds like a traveling salesman. "When I started here I went to each of the contracting agencies in the D.O.D. [U.S. Defense Department] and laid out my store," he explains. "I went to the generals, the chief scientists and then to the junior staff who write requirements for proposals. The argument that I used is that we are the only ally with a broad background in all the technologies underpinning S.D.I." Orman also thought the U.S.-British "special relationship" might help. "We are a trusted ally," he says, "and have proven capable of keeping each other's secrets."

Unfortunately, Orman says, "our knowledge of the U.S. contract scene was too meager to realize how difficult it would actually be." Last summer the House of Commons Defense Committee revealed that Britain had as yet received only $34 million in S.D.I. research funds—an embarrassing 2.2 percent of the $1.5 billion that former Defense Minister Michael Heseltine had suggested might flow to Britain for S.D.I. work. The committee asserted that the main reason for this "disappointing performance" was "the intrinsic difficulties that face companies trying to penetrate the American defense market." Top of the list were the "cumbersome Department of Defense bureaucracy and long-standing restrictions on technology transfer." According to an informal poll last year in the *Financial Times*, more than half of British defense contractors have lost faith that they will ever see a substantial amount of money from S.D.I., and they have stopped trying to develop long-term proposals for Star Wars–related projects.

Across Europe, the sobering news is beginning to sink in. At one point European firms had hoped to garner at least 15 percent of the total $26 billion proposed for S.D.I. between 1985 and 1989. That budget has since been scaled down to $18 billion, and the Federation of American Scientists estimates that European contractors will be in the running for only 1 percent of that total. In its 1986 report, the Italian Defense Ministry, which had vigorously supported S.D.I., concluded that "European firms have lost some of their interest in S.D.I. as a result of the substantial reductions in the type and value of the research." The Italians may have foreseen this development. According to Paul Gallis, co-author of a Congressional Research Service study on S.D.I., their memorandum of understanding is limited to generalities. "They did not want to look foolish," Gallis says, "so they committed to very little." As of last year, Italian companies had won contracts for roughly $15 mil-

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lion, all in association with American firms. The single most important contract, for $7 million, was awarded last July to SNIA Bpd, a Fiat affiliate, to study designs for a defense system against the very missiles that are scheduled to be destroyed under the terms of the intermediate-range nuclear forces accord.

German industry, the leader in many of the technologies required by the Pentagon (such as optics, signal processing and fusion research), has been granted the largest volume of foreign contracts to date, totaling $44 million, according to the S.D.I. Organization. Yet there is disillusionment even there: Manfred von Nordheim, Washington representative of the aerospace giant Messerschmitt-Boelkow-Blohm, says bluntly, "Most German firms were skeptical from the beginning with regards to getting much money out of S.D.I. Now they see themselves reinforced in that skepticism." MBB is a recipient of $31 million in S.D.I. funds but, says von Nordheim, "We're not that cheap. I don't think we can be bought for that."

Not only have top European officials complained to Washington that the S.D.I. party never got off the ground, they also fear that the United States may have had a hidden agenda, using the project as a vehicle for raids on European technology by a U.S. defense establishment that has lost its competitive edge. And they suspect that the S.D.I. agreements were used by the hard-liner Richard Perle to expand the Pentagon's Militarily Critical Technologies List of items restricted for export to the Soviet Union and its allies by the sixteen-nation Consultative Coordinating Committee (COCOM).

Perle resigned last June, to the relief of many Europeans, but his legacy remains. He himself negotiated the technology security provisions of the agreements. Those provisions grant the United States unprecedented access to review technologies being developed in countries cooperating with S.D.I.

The "secret" German agreement, leaked to a Cologne newspaper, shows the mechanics of a U.S. intrusion into European industry via S.D.I. Former NATO counselor Bernhard Zepter explains, "The owner of a German firm gets a request from Poland, say, to import a machine or a piece of technology. The owner asks the government and gets a green light for the sale. Then the government must inform the U.S., which says that the technology is 'very critical.'" At this point, says Zepter, "the German government is obliged to freeze the export until a review can be conducted by an American military officer"—who must be consulted before the export moves forward. One product affected, according to Zepter, was a new toaster whose heat sensors might conceivably have a military application.

Barely three months after the Thatcher government signed its Star Wars agreement, Whitehall was rocked by revelations of an attempted raid on British secrets by a Defense Department consultant named Clarence Robinson. *Jane's Defence Weekly* reported that Robinson had tried, without Ministry of Defense approval, to use his ties with Perle's Office of Security to obtain detailed plans of some of Britain's

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most sensitive defense projects, with the intention of adding them to the Pentagon's Militarily Critical Technologies List. In the end, British defense labs refused to cooperate.

Because of the high degree of secrecy that surrounds COCOM, European fears about American motives have only recently begun to surface. But last year, a National Academy of Sciences team, including onetime Defense Secretary Melvin Laird and former Central Intelligence Agency deputy chief Bobby Inman, harshly criticized the effect of new U.S. export control policies. The team reported that the memorandums of understanding on S.D.I. had prompted European concerns that "not only are they impeded in gaining access to the technology that would help Europe become competitive with the U.S. and Japan but they are also hampered in their commercial applications of the technology (some of which they helped to develop)." The team also decided that Perle's efforts to expand the COCOM list of restricted products was having "an increasingly corrosive effect on relations with many NATO countries," and noted that many governments had protested that Perle's list far exceeded what was justified for reasons of security. Perle reportedly told several European defense officials that the most sensitive S.D.I. work would not be commissioned from European industry while he remained in office.

Stanley Orman and other European advocates of S.D.I. are now forced to admit that the worst fears of the project's critics have been realized. Aside from E.D.I. feasibility studies, which amount to some $25 million to $30 million, Orman says the only contracts likely to come Europe's way are through "teaming arrangements with American contractors." Under those arrangements, the primary contractor retains all rights to the final product and to any civilian spin-offs—or what one British I.B.M. executive derisively called "drip-offs." Even in the event of a genuine European-U.S. partnership, says Glyn Ford, author of an S.D.I. study for the Science and Technology Committee of the European Parliament, much of the technology arising from S.D.I. would be likely to end up classified and unavailable for civilian production.

The deal struck over S.D.I. was a one-sided bargain, leaving European enthusiasts scrambling for a windfall that refuses to materialize and a project that their own governments find more of a threat than a guarantee of security. As even the indomitable Orman concedes, "The time-scale is piffle, the concept of a perfect defense is piffle."

In the battle to sell S.D.I. in Europe, the Reagan Administration may have won a Pyrrhic victory. Next time around there may be no Stanley Ormans eager to do Washington's bidding. At a time when the economic rules of the U.S.-European relationship are changing fast, the episode raises fundamental questions about the reliability of American leadership and Washington's willingness to tolerate European independence. McCusker of the North Atlantic Assembly, for one, believes that the sour experience of S.D.I. has been a vital factor in spurring the Europeans to break with traditional U.S. dominance and develop defense strategies of their own.

Now, with the Reagan-Gorbachev I.N.F. agreement, which undermines the basic premise of European support for S.D.I., the distance across the Atlantic seems only to have widened. One Congressional official comments: "People have come through my office—M.P.s from Britain, the Defense Minister from the Netherlands—all complaining about S.D.I. [West German Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich] Genscher says it's all a joke—he doesn't like the fact that signing the M.O.U. gave an imprimatur of German support for S.D.I. . . . They're all asking, Where are the contracts? Why did we sign this agreement?" □

LETTERS.

(*Continued From Page 38*)

asking whether the fund should help finance the activities of the Trade Union Educational League. (This, by the way, at a time when Samuel Gompers was charging publicly that the T.U.E.L. had millions of dollars for its activities, obtained from the Soviet Union.) Specifically, Baldwin asked if Saposs would give his "judgment on it [the T.U.E.L.] from the point of view of its place in the American labor movement, its possible usefulness and the soundness of its arrangement?" To which query Saposs replied late in December 1922. He wrote, in part:

> From my observation of the activities of the Trade Union Educational League since its inception I feel confident that it is the best equipped organization to foster the creation of a sound, progressive and constructive trade union opinion. Its success in mobilizing the intelligent, "active" spirits, and in convincing them that disruptionist tactics are fallacious, as well as its success in popularizing "amalgamation" is indicative that it bodes to be useful and constructive beyond expectation.
>
> I believe there are few activities that are as deserving of financial aid by the Fund for Public Service as the Trade Union Educational League.

None of these activities of the league nor of any aspects of the organization which caused Saposs' observations are even mentioned, let alone discussed, by Montgomery.

It is true that the league made its own share of mistakes that weakened its influence, but this was not as crucial as the reactionary, Red-baiting policies of the established leadership of the labor movement. Even after it suffered setbacks in 1923, including the expulsion of William Dunne, a member of the league and the Workers' Party from the American Federation of Labor convention—which Montgomery notes took place in a "lynch-mob atmosphere"—the Trade Union Educational League remained a driving force for change in the labor movement. The casual treatment of this organization in *The Fall of the House of Labor*, along with the equally casual treatment of William Z. Foster, bespeaks an anti-Communist prejudice that is startling.

Philip S. Foner

KAZIN REPLIES

Washington

Criticisms of what an author left out of his book are best addressed to the author himself. But two points should be made about Foner's special pleading. First, Montgomery places the T.U.E.L. in the context of a declining labor movement and an even weaker American left in the mid-1920s. Neither Foster nor Lenin was able to do much about that. Second, to accuse Montgomery of anti-Communism because he doesn't share Foner's scholarly preoccupations is both ridiculous and sad. Foner is either being sectarian or is merely jealous of the stature of another historian. *Michael Kazin*

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BOOKS & THE ARTS.

Strong Counsel

DANA GIOIA

ROCK AND HAWK: A Selection of Shorter Poems by Robinson Jeffers. *Edited by Robert Hass. Random House. 292 pp. $19.95.*

No major American poet has been treated worse by posterity than Robinson Jeffers. Twenty-five years after his death, he has still not received either a collected poems or a responsible biography. The only comprehensive bibliography of his work appeared in 1933—shortly after Jeffers's sudden rise to fame—and was never updated to cover the remaining three-quarters of his prolific career. His critical and autobiographical prose remains scattered. Although the poet lived and wrote until 1962, the only substantial gathering of his voluminous work appeared half a century ago in Random House's 1938 *Selected Poems of Robinson Jeffers.*

In 1955 Horace Gregory called Jeffers the "poet without critics." In 1987, the centennial of the poet's birth, one would hardly revise that verdict. Academic interest in Jeffers remains negligible. No longer considered prominent enough to attack by critics, he is now ignored. Not only is there little first-rate academic commentary on his poetry. Compared with the massive scholarship on his most significant contemporaries—Eliot, Pound, Williams, Moore, Stevens, Frost, Crane and Cummings—there isn't even much second-rate writing. What little scholarship appears originates mainly in California, where Jeffers spent virtually all his adult life. Half a century ago he towered as an international literary figure. Now he survives as a regional figure studied mainly by specialists in West Coast authors.

Although no representative historical anthology can exclude Jeffers's verse, few general collections of poetry consider him worth notice. The three widely used, nonhistorical college textbooks on my shelf—X.J. Kennedy's *An Introduction to Poetry*, John Ciardi and Miller Williams's *How Does a Poem Mean?* and John Frederick Nims's *Western Wind: An Introduction to Poetry*—include only one short poem by Jeffers in their collective 1,300-plus pages. Poor Jeffers! Even Rod McKuen gets two poems.

As these anthologies suggest, Jeffers is not much taught. An informal poll of friends who teach college-level English revealed that not one was ever assigned a Jeffers poem from high school through graduate study. Nor, it seems important to add, are any of them currently teaching him in their classes. His verse, especially the wild, expansive narratives that made him famous in the 1920s, does not fit into the conventional definitions of modern American poetry. His work is not essentially lyric, elliptical, stylistically innovative or self-referential. Likewise his preoccupations with sexuality, violence, intergenerational conflict and the extremes of mental and physical disease bear little relation to the thematics of his poetic contemporaries. (One can't imagine Wallace Stevens writing on incest or Marianne Moore on patricide.) Instead, Jeffers's poems ask to be compared to the work of novelists and dramatists like Lawrence, Faulkner, Hemingway and O'Neill—a difficult request for academic specialists who usually study these genres in isolation.

The academy's neglect is particularly interesting because Jeffers, unlike most modernist poets, still commands a general readership. Compared with the usual audience for twentieth-century poetry (which is made up mainly of poets, would-be poets, academic specialists and students), Jeffers's readers form an unusual group. Few of them inhabit English departments. If they are at the university at all, they will most likely be found in the sciences. In the author's lifetime they were so numerous that he became one of the best-selling serious poets in American history. Even now enough fans remain to keep fourteen books of his verse in print without the subsidy of a captive student market. His 622-page *Selected Poems* has been reprinted so many times (with progressively cheaper paper and binding) that Random House has lost count of its sales. Even the meager paperback selection of fifty-eight short poems issued after his death sold over 80,000 copies before it went out of print last year.

In a culture where most intellectuals agree that "poetry makes nothing happen," Jeffers also remains strangely influential. He is the unchallenged laureate of environmentalists. The Sierra Club's lavish folio *Not Man Apart: Photographs of the Big Sur Coast*, poems by Jeffers with illustrations by Ansel Adams, Edward Weston and others, helped focus political efforts to preserve that spectacular stretch of California coast the poet celebrated in his verse. It also turned a passage from his 1937 poem "The Answer" into a credo for Western conservationists:

> A severed hand
> Is an ugly thing, and man dissevered
> from the earth and stars and his history . . . for contemplation or in fact . . .
> Often appears atrociously ugly. Integrity is wholeness, the greatest beauty is
> Organic wholeness, the wholeness of life and things, the divine beauty of the universe. Love that, not man
> Apart from that, or else you will share man's pitiful confusions, or drown in despair when his days darken.

Perhaps what makes Jeffers's poetry so important to environmentalists is exactly what repels academics. More than any other American modernist Jeffers wrote about ideas—not teasing epistemologies, learned allusions or fictive paradoxes—but big, naked, howling ideas that no reader can miss. The directness and clarity of Jeffers's style reflects the priority he put on communicating his world view. Many interesting studies have been written on the style of Eliot and Stevens, for indeed one needs to understand *how* most modernist poems mean (to use Ciardi's famous formulation) before one can understand *what* they mean. Jeffers's verse, however, presents no such barriers to an intelligent reader. It states its propositions so lucidly that the critic has no choice but to confront its content. The discussion can no longer be confined within the safe literary categories of formal analysis—internal structure, consistency, thematics, tone and symbolism—that still constitute the overwhelming majority of all academic studies. Instead, he or she must deal with the difficult and disagreeable primary issues of religious belief and morality.

Dana Gioia writes frequently on poetry for The Hudson Review *and elsewhere. A book of his poems,* Daily Horoscope, *was published by Graywolf Press.*

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HYPOCRISY: AMERICA'S LEADING EXPORT

Under the cover of "making the world safe for democracy", the U.S. has countless Military interventions and covert operations directed at destabilizing sovereign nations and popularly supported governments. Washington, D.C.'s rhetoric about democratic rights is twice over a fraud. Its global exploits have more to do with propping up multinational corporate interests than with the export of democracy. And the U.S. record on democracy at home is abysmal.

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Jeffers's world view certainly never makes it easy for his critics. His self-proclaimed philosophy of "inhumanism" contains something to offend everyone—Christian, Jew, Marxist or humanist—who assumes man's central position in the cosmos. He resolutely refused to be bound by any of the usual allegiances of human society—not merely those of race, class, religion or nation. (Voltaire and Nietzsche had already questioned those pieties.) Jeffers's originality came in going beyond social loyalties to the more fundamental ones of species, time and even—no, I'm not kidding—planet. No poet ever wrote more consistently *sub specie aeternitatis*. For Jeffers, humanity was ultimately only one species, which happened to gain biological ascendancy (like the bison or the passenger pigeon) over a particular range in a certain epoch. Mankind may be more intelligent or adaptable than other species, but these gifts hardly compensate for its cruelty, greed and arrogance. Before any other imaginative writer Jeffers articulated the immense evil inherent in humanity's assumption that it stands above and apart from the world. He saw the pollution of the environment, the destruction of other species, the squandering of natural resources, the recurrent urge to war, the violent squalor of cities as the inevitable result of a race out of harmony with its own world.

Attempting this cosmic scope, carrying the weight of his harsh message, Jeffers took as great a risk as any more stylistically innovative modernist. He not only risked being pompous and banal with his grave philosophizing. Stating his uncomfortable ideas strongly and lucidly, he risked being *wrong*. Alone among the modernist poets, he challenged the scientists on their own territory. Unlike most writers, he had studied science seriously in college and graduate school. His break with tradition was intellectual, not stylistic. He accepted the destruction of anthropocentric values explicit in current biology, geology and physics, which humanists had struggled against since the Victorian age. Instead, Jeffers concentrated on articulating the moral, philosophical and, indeed, imaginative implications of those discoveries. He struggled to answer the questions science had been able only to ask: What are man's responsibilities in a world not made solely for him? How does humankind lead a good and meaningful life without God? Jeffers's great triumph is that now—sixty years after he began his radical redefinition of human values—his answers still seem disturbingly fresh and cogent, while the political and social theories of Pound, Yeats, Eliot and others have become musty period pieces.

But Jeffers's poetic independence came at the price of being banished from the academic canon, where the merits of a modernist are still mostly determined by distinctiveness of stylistic innovation and self-referential consistency of vision. In this environment Robert Hass's *Rock and Hawk: A Selection of Shorter Poems by Robinson Jeffers* constitutes a major act of restitution. This medium-sized anthology represents, difficult as it is to believe, the first representative selection from Jeffers's life work ever assembled. There are criticisms to be made of the collection, but one must first credit the seriousness and quality of effort displayed here. The book is well conceived, intelligently edited, suavely introduced and beautifully designed. It also contains some of the best poetry ever written by an American.

The critical language we have inherited from modernism makes it difficult to discuss the qualities that distinguish Jeffers's poetry without sounding hopelessly out of touch with contemporary literary taste. To say that his chief imaginative gifts were scope, simplicity, narrative poise and moral seriousness makes him seem closer to a distinguished jurist than a great poet. But there was something of the judge—particularly the Old Testament variety—about Jeffers. Standing apart from the world, he passed dispassionate judgment on his race and civilization, and he found them wanting. Pointing out some grievous contradictions at the core of Western industrial society earned Jeffers a reputation as a bitter misanthrope (he sometimes was) but this verdict hardly invalidates the essential accuracy of his message. As clearly as any Marxist he saw the interdependence of economic and moral ideologies. His genius came in translating these complex sociopolitical situations into a few stunning images. In "Ave Caesar," for instance, he portrays a crippling contradiction at the heart of America's vision of its destiny:

> No bitterness: our ancestors did it.
> They were only ignorant and hopeful,
> they wanted freedom but wealth too.
> Their children will learn to hope for a
> Caesar.
> Or rather—for we are not aquiline
> Romans but soft mixed colonists—

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Some kindly Sicilian tyrant who'll keep
Poverty and Carthage off until the Romans arrive.
We are easy to manage, a gregarious people,
Full of sentiment, clever at mechanics,
and we love our luxuries.

This short poem shows Jeffers's unique style. His language is direct and conversational without ever being dull or simplistic. The subject unfolds as clearly as in expository prose. A listener can follow the story perfectly, even on first hearing. The language, while strong and concise, never calls so much momentary attention to itself that it overwhelms the narrative line. The images and metaphors are subordinated to a paraphrasable argument. One notices what Jeffers is saying, not how he says it. His subject also has a public importance one rarely sees in modern poetry.

On rereading the poem, however, one notices how much Jeffers has packed into these eight lines. He sets up three temporal planes—the past of the ancestors, the present of the speaker and the future of the children—and outlines the political choices each must make. He manages to condemn American values without bitterness, through a clever rhetorical trick. He begins the poem by discussing contemporary America, but just as the message becomes harsh (at the end of line three) the narrator relocates it metaphorically to the ancient Mediterranean world. Without ever being difficult this metaphor is complex. It shifts twice, each time becoming slightly crueler. First the children will "learn to hope" (through unpleasant experience) for a Caesar (notice they don't get the heroic original but some latter-day autocrat). No sooner has this insult registered, however, than Jeffers qualifies it. His fellow Americans don't even deserve to be called decadent Romans. The Romans (like, by implication, the British) at least once built a great empire civilization. Americans are merely soft colonials like the Sicilians and a petty tyrant is enough to keep them in order.

Even by today's hyperbolic standards Jeffers's public career was remarkable for the speed both of his rise to literary fame and his plunge to critical dismissal. His public breakthrough resembled a young writer's daydream. Having published two volumes of elegantly dull juvenilia, Jeffers was unable to place any of his mature poetry. After years of quiet work he decided in 1924 to publish

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Tamar and Other Poems with a vanity press. For a year after it appeared nothing happened. Then James Rorty and George Sterling decided to use one of Jeffers's new poems as the title piece for *Continent's End*, a 1925 anthology of California verse, and the grateful poet sent them both copies of *Tamar*. (After all, the 37-year-old author had nearly all the original printed copies still stuffed in his tiny attic.) Suddenly Jeffers's luck changed. Not only did Rorty review the book ecstatically in March 1925 for *The New York Herald Tribune* but he also passed on copies to Mark Van Doren, who lauded it a few days later in *The Nation*, and Babette Deutsch, who told readers in *The New Republic* that she "felt somewhat as Keats professed to feel, on looking into Chapman's Homer."

Jeffers shipped a coffin-sized crate of books to New York City, where they immediately sold out. By November an expanded trade edition containing Jeffers's most famous poem, "Roan Stallion," was issued by Boni and Liveright. The critical reception was tumultuous. Dozens of excited articles and reviews appeared hailing Jeffers as a great tragic poet. Critics compared him to Sophocles and Shakespeare and *Roan Stallion, Tamar and Other Poems* went into multiple reprintings. Leonard and Virginia Woolf published a British edition. Even a French translation was reprinted five times. By the end of the decade, Alfred Kreymborg felt obliged to devote the final chapter of his now forgotten but still engaging *Our Singing Strength: A History of American Poetry 1620–1930* solely to Jeffers, declaring him the heir to Whitman.

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When Boni and Liveright went bankrupt, in 1933, thirteen publishers scrambled to sign up Jeffers, who had recently appeared on the cover of *Time*. The wily Bennett Cerf flew out to Carmel to court him personally. He knew Jeffers's name would add prestige to his fledgling Random House. As Cerf later commented, "There are always a few poets that people think it's smart to have around." Indeed, by then Jeffers was so chic that Carmel real estate brokers used his name in their ads to sell property.

Meanwhile, Jeffers remained in Carmel where he and his beloved, domineering wife, Una, had lived since fall 1914. Carmel then was not the chic resting place for retired financiers and real estate moguls it is today but an isolated rural area with a touch of bohemianism. Writers since Robert Louis Stevenson and Jack London had found its breathtaking scenery and its privacy invigorating. But it was more than Carmel's natural magnificence that first drove the couple there. They also needed to escape their past—the long, scandalous breakup of Una's first marriage in Los Angeles and the death of the newlyweds' first daughter at birth. They had hoped to move to England (as Frost, H.D., Eliot and Pound already had), but the outbreak of World War I prevented them. They came instead to Big Sur, their "inevitable place," where they would remain the rest of their lives.

The couple lived simply, without electricity or indoor plumbing, in Tor House, a small stone cottage that Robin, as his few friends called him, had constructed on a headland overlooking the Pacific at Carmel Point. He wrote in the morning, quarried stone for further building in the afternoon and read to his wife and twin sons by lamplight each evening. Little changed for them after he achieved fame, except for the pestering of visitors. But Jeffers's austere, colorful life and patrician good looks made him a favorite subject for the press, and, as with Frost, a popular myth soon began forming around this quiet, private man.

To his credit Jeffers ignored his celebrity. He wanted nothing to do with literary society or worshipful fans. What the 40-year-old author now wanted was to work. Inspired by his sudden if late success, he made up for lost time by embarking on the most remarkable, ambitious and bizarre series of narrative poems in American literature. In the ten years following the acclaim of *Roan Stallion*, Jeffers published eight major collections of poetry: *The Women at Point Sur*, *Cawdor and Other Poems*, *Dear Judas and Other Poems*, *Descent to the Dead*, *Thurso's Landing*, *Give Your Heart to the Hawks*, *Solstice and Other Poems* and *Such Counsels You Gave Me and Other Poems*—nearly a book a year, almost a thousand pages of verse in all. These poems, which have never been adequately assessed by literary criticism, constitute an American realist and regionalist alternative to the mandarin aestheticism of international modernism. Largely ignored by poets in the two generations after Jeffers, curiously, they are just beginning to have an impact on American literature through the young poets currently reviving narrative verse.

Nearly every volume centers around one or more long narrative poems, usually set in Big Sur. Violent, sexy, subversive, these compelling verse novellas are impossible to describe briefly. Sometimes hard to stomach, they are always difficult to put down. Their tragic stories of family rivalry and primal emotion usually move at lightning pace toward their bloody finales. There is nothing quite like them in American poetry. In sheer narrative energy and visual scope they frequently remind one of movies. Not real films but wild, imaginary ones where high and low art collide—Bergman's *Cries and Whispers* reshot as a Peckinpah western or Kurosawa's *Rashomon* reset as a California thriller by DePalma. In these poems Jeffers's central human obsessions emerge as the suffocating burden of the past on human freedom, the harsh interdependence of power and sexuality and the impossibility of human salvation. At their worst they become ponderously philosophic and psychologically hyperbolic. At their best, however, as in "Cawdor," they remain among the few successful long poems in modern American literature.

From the beginning these narratives divided Jeffers's audience. Many of his early supporters could not accept the sprawling energy, the lurid violence, the sheer weirdness of *The Women at Point Sur*. What critics had judged as a young poet's momentary nightmare in "Tamar" or "Roan Stallion" now emerged as Jeffers's considered view of humanity. Each book fueled new controversy. Conservative readers bridled at Jeffers's explicit sexuality, his strident anti-

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Christianity and antinationalism. Leftists found his distrust of all political programs for human improvement repugnant. His use of free verse and Freudian psychology likewise alienated literary reactionaries. Meanwhile, the New Critics rightly perceived Jeffers's commitment to a poetry of direct statement and linear narrative as a challenge to the high modernist mode they had championed. To the degree they acknowledged Jeffers at all, the New Critics attacked him savagely. Yvor Winters suggested that if Jeffers truly believed his own philosophy, he should kill himself. Randall Jarrell mocked him as "Old Rocky Face, perched on his sea crag . . . who must prefer a hawk to a man, a stone to a hawk." All factions agreed Jeffers had no place in textbooks or anthologies.

The controversial long poems caused Jeffers another problem as well: they overshadowed his shorter work. Reviewers treated him like a novelist. As his collections appeared, they focused on the central narrative and ignored how many stunning short poems were literally tucked away in the back pages of each book. The critical agenda was to debate the psychological realism and moral impetus of each histrionic story, not listen carefully to the sad, quiet music of Jeffers's lyric poems. Complaining in *The New Yorker* about "Robinson Jeffers's latest set-piece of human savagery," Louise Bogan was so busy damning the title poem of *Such Counsels You Gave Me* that she missed "The Purse-Seine," "The Answer" and "The Beaks of Eagles" in the same volume, all of them, I believe, permanent additions to American literature.

Though Jeffers's books continued to sell well, by the end of the 1930s his critical reputation had collapsed, never to rise again. The Depression had made his cosmic pessimism less palatable to intellectuals caught up in international politics. Jeffers still commanded a small but devoted group of serious readers, but the literary establishment had deserted him. The orthodoxy of Eliot and Joyce had banished all other variants of modernism. Finally, Pearl Harbor did what little damage to his reputation there was left to deliver. For years Jeffers had warned that America's entry into a new world war would drag the country into the temptations of imperialism. Now his refusal to endorse the American war effort as an absolute good fighting absolute evil disgusted many of his remaining readers.

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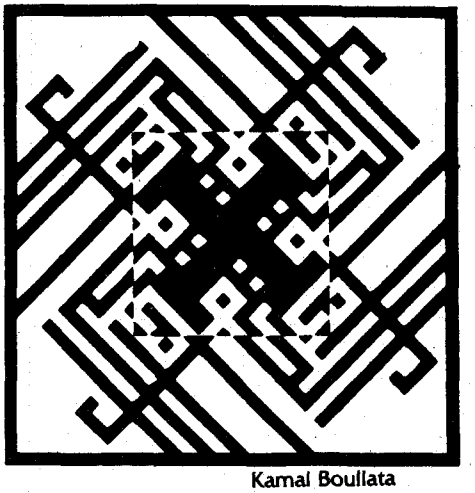

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Surely not only international but literary politics contributed to Jeffers's fall from public grace. He had no interest in the literary world, and once the initially receptive literati realized his indifference, they gradually returned it. Even then the American poetry world was a buzzing network of personal loyalties, interests and obligations that collectively shaped literary fashion. Unlike a Pound or Frost, Jeffers never developed the relationships that sustain a writer's reputation through the vacillations of opinion. Hating big cities, he scarcely stirred from Carmel. (Eleven years once passed between visits to San Francisco, only a hundred miles up the coast.) He would not teach or lecture. He scarcely answered his mail, and even then he was more likely to respond to a serviceman than a fellow writer. He declined all invitations to read from his work. The one reading tour of his career—at the age of 54, in 1941—was undertaken only to pay his property taxes in a Carmel growing too expensive for him. Worst of all for his reputation, Jeffers stayed in California, which the literary establishments of London and New York have never taken seriously. Has any American author ever been able to build and sustain a major literary presence from the West Coast? As writers from Allen Ginsberg to Joan Didion know, if one lives out West, one must also keep an apartment in Manhattan.

By 1948 even Random House had grown impatient with their former prestige author. Reading the manuscript of *The Double Axe*, Jeffers's editor, Saxe Commins, declared it "proof of early senility" to his colleagues and forcefully persuaded the author to tone down its political language. Jeffers eventually dropped ten short poems from the manuscript and made changes in eight more, mostly removing slighting comments about Roosevelt and Truman. But Commins convinced Cerf to print an embarrassing disclaimer on the dust jacket and front section of the volume to announce that "Random House feels compelled to go on record with its disagreement over some of the political views pronounced by the poet." Meanwhile, Cerf, always the businessman, commented hopefully that this "footnote" would "attract added space and attention from reviewers." Thus high principle and low commercialism combined to reduce the public reception of one of Jeffers's most powerful volumes to a political squabble. By the time the reviewers began their attack Jeffers probably didn't care. He now lived almost totally in the quiet isolation of his family. When Una died two years later, he sank gradually into an alcoholic loneliness waiting for his own death. The end of his last long poem, "Hungerfield," written in 1954, is heartbreaking. The violent story finishes, and suddenly Jeffers breaks into an unexpected lyric coda:

> Here is the poem, dearest; you will never read it nor hear it. You were more beautiful
> Than a hawk flying; you were faithful and a lion heart like this rough hero Hungerfield. But the ashes have fallen
> And the flame has gone up; nothing human remains. You are earth and air; you are in the beauty of the ocean
> And the great streaming triumphs of sundown; you are alive and well in the tender young grass rejoicing
> When soft rain falls all night, and little rosy-fleeced clouds float on the dawn. —I shall be with you presently.

A few years later Jeffers joined his wife in the nonhuman world. His ashes were buried with hers in the Tor House garden. "Posthumous long before his death," as Robert Zaller put it, his obituaries displayed "chiefly the surprise that he had still been living." He had never won a major literary award, but the bulk of his work was still in print.

In attempting to rehabilitate Jeffers's reputation, Robert Hass has sidestepped the central issue in evaluating the poet's legacy by limiting his selections for *Rock and Hawk* to Jeffers's shorter work. Fortunately, he cheats a little by stretching the definition of "shorter" to include two fiery medium-length narratives—the early "Roan Stallion" and the late "Hungerfield" (twenty-one and twenty-two tightly packed pages, respectively). But beyond these Hass offers only two unpersuasive excerpts from *The Tower Beyond Tragedy* (Jeffers's reworking of *The Oresteia*) and *The Women at Point Sur* as well as the two lyric set-pieces from "Cawdor" that Jeffers himself chose for his 1938 *Selected Poems*. One can understand, if not totally sympathize with, Hass's conservatism. He wants to present Jeffers at his most accessible and uncontroversial best. Certainly the case he makes for Jeffers in this volume is irresistible, if incomplete.

No reader ever entirely approves of someone else's selections from a favorite poet. But the usual grumbling aside, Hass does an excellent job. Even in his short work Jeffers wrote obsessively about a few subjects, and Hass displays exemplary taste in presenting just enough of the best poems of each sort to register the author's fixations without wearying the reader. Hass's choices also reflect some interesting biases beyond the omission of any long narratives. He generally favors the earlier work to the later. Most of the poems I would wish to add come from the second half of the canon. Poems like "Hellenistics," "Cassandra," "The Eye" and "Why Do You Still Make War?" seem conspicuous in their absence. Hass also reprints virtually all of *Descent to the Dead* (an atypical collection written after Jeffers visited Britain and Ireland), presumably to highlight the unacknowledged debt Ted Hughes and Seamus Heaney owe the elder poet.

Knowledgeable and sympathetic though Hass is, however, he does make a few curious mistakes. Organizing his selections according to the original volumes from which they are drawn, he places Jeffers's famous "Shine, Perishing Republic" in the wrong book. Meanwhile, going to the length of presenting the poems from *American Poetry 1927: A Miscellany* as a separate group (which Jeffers himself did not do in his *Selected Poems*), Hass conflates the title as *An American Miscellany*. He also misconstrues the lineation of "Hungerfield" at one point to give the poem a bizarre visual leap on the page at odds with Jeffers's intention. (This unfortunately is a common problem in reprinting long-lined free verse, about which Jeffers himself frequently complained.) These are small mistakes but annoying ones. The book also lacks an index of poems by title and, worse yet, an index by first line. Publishers today assume that readers no longer search out a poem because a particular line has been buzzing around in their heads. And the publishers are almost right. Most contemporary poetry is eminently forgettable.

But Jeffers is a distractingly memorable writer. Rereading his poems in *Rock and Hawk*, I found an astonishing number of his lines tumbling around in my head. But hearing them there, I noticed it wasn't only their strong music I savored but the hard edge of their wisdom. They held their own against experience. It was good to live with these poems again. Jeffers has entered his second century quite splendidly. □

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THEATER.

MOIRA HODGSON

Serious Money
Breaking the Code
The Mahabharata

"Sexy greed *is* the late eighties," says one character in *Serious Money*, a new British play by Caryl Churchill at the Public Theater in New York City. "You can be greedy and still feel good about yourself."

The play, by the author of *Fen* and *Top Girls*, is one of the most interesting of the season. A brutal satire of the City (as London's financial district is called) and the wheeling and dealing sanctioned by Thatcher's government, it is set in verse, like a Restoration comedy (the play is prefaced with a scene from Shadwell's 1692 *The Stock Jobbers—plus ça change*). *Serious Money* is not neatly constructed in the Terence Rattigan school of playwrighting; it is more like a fast-moving entertainment, with characters that are hardly subtle but viciously drawn, like clever caricatures. The language is harsh and savage, sometimes brilliant, sometimes puerile—and often startling to members of the audience unused to hearing so many different four-letter words in an evening.

We are in London after the deregulation of the stock market a year ago, a move known as the Big Bang, which opened it to foreigners and ended the distinction between jobbers (who hold shares and set the price) and brokers. This led to a boom in trading—but within only two months scandals erupted over Ivan Boesky in New York City and Guinness in London.

The entire play, directed at a clip by Max Stafford-Clark, is a tumult of greed: greed on the floor of LIFFE (London International Financial Future Exchange) in the City, greed in pubs, bars and board rooms. Peter Hartwell's set is like a bull ring surrounded by flashing computer screens, ringing telephones, clocks showing international time and a bar lined with bottles of vintage champagne, which the young dealers refer to as "poo." In this arena greed hits a high pitch, with the roar of obscenities, the screaming of numbers, frenzied gesticulations and maneuvers that will leave poor countries poorer, sink corporations and destroy the small investor. Each act ends with a raucous rap song by Ian Dury, performed by the entire company.

Churchill does not take sides. She attacks the old school as hypocrites, the new order as a bunch of young hustlers in for quick profit. She doesn't spare Africans who sell out their countries or rich Latin Americans who make a living off cocaine. She also takes on the class system: The old boy network is being invaded by a group from low social shelves. "It just don't look so pretty/ All the cunning little jobs/ When you see them done by yobs."

The sixteen-member cast changes roles several times during the evening. Linda Bassett is an establishment broker who sounds and looks like Thatcher, a steel-and-honey arbitrageuse who turns a fortune trading on inside information, and a P.R. expert who advises a corporate raider to improve his image by sponsoring the National Theatre (Boesky was once on the board of the Public Theater). Daniel Webb is a Bob Hoskins–like tycoon and bond trader, and Allan Corduner, with accents that veer from the brilliant to the terrible (the latter an American), is, among others, chair of Albion and president of Missouri Gumballs. Meera Syal gives a superb performance as Jacinta Condor, a ruthless Peruvian businesswoman whose tryst with a banker never takes place because they can't coordinate a free moment in their Filofaxes.

The play is so fast-paced that at times you can't follow the dialogue; but even if you don't know what greenmail, junk bonds or leveraged buy-outs are, you won't fail to get the message. *Serious Money* began its run at the Royal Court Theatre, which puts on the sort of left-wing Socialist plays Somerset Maugham would have called scum. (*Look Back in Anger* opened there nearly thirty years ago.) Ironically, it immediately became a hit with the very set it satirizes. The theater was booked out by parties that don't normally set foot in the Royal Court and are far more likely to be seen at *Cats* or *Les Misérables*—bankers, securities traders and futures brokers—before it moved to the commercial West End.

Another recent British import to New York, *Breaking the Code*, by Hugh Whitemore, is also about "the system," in this case British justice that until the 1960s made male homosexuality a crime. Derek Jacobi gives one of the finest performances I have ever seen on a stage, as Alan Turing, a mathematician and eccentric genius who broke the

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Nazis' Enigma code during World War II. The breaking of this code is passed over almost unnoticed in the play, while Turing's breaking of another code, the moral code, is the central issue; his former service to the government means nothing in its wake.

The play takes place in a series of flashbacks over thirty years, from Turing's schooldays leading up to his arrest in the 1950s for "gross indecency." "Winston thought the world of him"; but Turing liked rough trade. While homosexuality was vaguely tolerated in boarding schools and even at the university, it was not something to be continued afterward. Turing went to Sherborne School, where earlier Alec Waugh, Evelyn's brother, had caused the scandal of the school's 400-year history by publishing *The Loom of Youth*, a book about homosexuality in the dormitories.

Jacobi's conception of Turing is intelligent and shrewd; he never sinks into pathos. He stutters because his mind moves faster than his tongue, not because he is shy. He shuffles around in old baggy tweeds, chewing his nails, fussing with a briefcase that is split down one side, like many a don who has never quite left his undergraduate days behind him. But when he talks about mathematics, he soars; his heartfelt outbursts are like an erotic obsession and he becomes a man possessed. His sexual exploits, on the other hand, have none of that passion.

Like *Pack of Lies*, Hugh Whitemore's play about spies, ***Breaking the Code*** deals with the ruthlessness of governments in using people's lives to their own ends. The author does not advance any particular truths of his own, however, relying instead on Wittgenstein, Bertrand Russell and even Tolstoy to make the audience feel that they are watching something that is more than middlebrow entertainment.

But there are emotionally wrenching moments. The reaction of Turing's mother (Rachel Gurney) upon hearing both of his homosexuality and his imminent arrest does not ring a false note as she gains control of herself and takes him off to show him the new curtains in the guest bedroom. Michael Gough gives a remarkably sensitive performance as Dillwyn Knox, Turing's superior at Bletchley, where he works on the code during the war. Jenny Agutter is less successful as a female colleague who falls in love with Turing, because her part is never quite believable.

While *Breaking the Code* is essentially an undramatic play made dramatic by the acting, Peter Brook's *The Mahabharata* is the opposite. Here a dramatic text (the longest epic poem in the world) is turned into a pageant that is very beautiful to look at and utterly convincing in its evocation of India. However, the performance, which lasted ten hours and had two intermissions, left me impressed but unmoved.

Part of the problem is described by Brook himself in his book *The Shifting Point*, a collection of essays written between 1946 and 1987. "One of the difficulties we encounter when we see traditional theatre from the East is that we admire without understanding. Unless we possess the keys to the symbols, we remain on the outside, fascinated, perhaps, by the surface, but unable to contact human realities without which these complex art forms would never have arisen."

The Mahabharata, written in Sanskrit, is about fifteen times the length of the Bible. It tells the story of the Pandava brothers and their cousins the Kauravas, among whom there are 100 sons. A quarrel arises over who should rule the world and ends in an apocalyptic battle that decides the fate of the universe.

To stage this spectacle the Majestic Theater, a former vaudeville and opera house near the Brooklyn Academy of Music, was refurbished to look like a ruin, with chipped plaster, muddied dark greens and reds and remains of gilt leaf left as they were found after years of neglect. The stage has been removed and transformed into the ochre mud banks of a river. Along these banks the glorious spectacle unfolds, with circles of fire, tumbling acrobats, archers sending white arrows through the air, vivid pan-ethnic costumes in glowing colors, culminating in a bloody and devastating war brilliantly choreographed in minimalist poetic detail.

But for us the secrets of this mysterious age-old civilization are never laid bare. Instead, much of the action and many of the characters are incomprehensible (as were some of the accents of the international cast). At times, *The Mahabharata* came across with the subtlety of a Classics Illustrated version of the Bible. I would have liked to have seen the original performance in Avignon, in French, that took place in a limestone quarry from sunset to sunrise. Perhaps that setting would have made it more of a ceremony and less of a performance, and my expectations would have been different. □

FILMS.

TERRENCE RAFFERTY

Housekeeping

The Scottish director Bill Forsyth makes movies for dawdlers and daydreamers—people who stare out the window at nothing at all and turn away, hours later, with strange, dazed smiles on their faces, delighted by whatever mixture of memory, fancy and dogs crossing the street has just unreeled inside their head. His films—especially the last two, *Local Hero* and *Comfort and Joy*—are about the varieties of imaginative escape, the drifting gaze of those who don't feel too strongly connected to their time and their place. ***Housekeeping***, his fifth movie, is in many ways an apparent departure: It isn't primarily a comedy, not a bit of it was shot in Scotland and it's adapted from someone else's material, a 1981 novel by an American writer, Marilynne Robinson. His screenplay is almost slavishly faithful to Robinson's poetic, very literary book, which is based on her own idiosyncratic childhood and adolescence in 1950s Idaho; yet Forsyth doesn't wholly submerge his own personality. He moves right into Robinson's world and makes himself comfortable there, throwing open windows and dozing in sagging armchairs until the spirit of this unfamiliar place has seeped into him. You'd never know he's just passing through.

Robinson's novel is a moody, fragile thing—the kind of episodic memoir of youth whose effect depends almost entirely on the emotional qualities of its narrator's voice. It's the story of a pair of sisters growing up in a small Western town called Fingerbone, and most of the plot gets told in the first three sentences:

> My name is Ruth. I grew up with my younger sister, Lucille, under the care of my grandmother, Mrs. Sylvia Foster, and when she died, of her sisters-in-law, Misses Lily and Nona Foster, and when they fled, of her daughter, Mrs. Sylvia Fisher. Through all these generations of elders we lived in one house, my grandmother's house, built for her by her husband, Edmund Foster, an employee of the railroad, who escaped this world years before I entered it.

The few other facts we need to know—that Edmund Foster died in a train that plunged off the bridge over Fingerbone's lake and that the girls' mother, Helen, drove her car into the same lake on the

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day she brought her children to their grandmother's house—are rattled off before the first chapter's over, and the rest of the book is detail, texture, reflection and the slow unfolding of memory. The novel is about transience and fragility, the difficulty of holding on to people and things and, true to its theme, it doesn't offer much for a filmmaker to hold onto, either. It seems always on the verge of slipping away, like the girls' restless, distracted Aunt Sylvie (Christine Lahti), who keeps disappearing on long walks and knows the times of all the trains by heart. Forsyth's approach to this determinedly elusive material seems the only one possible—although not many other directors would have thought of it, and fewer still could have carried it off. He follows the book's wayward, tentative rhythms, the bobbing motion of its becalmed narrative and gently unsettled characters, he allows himself to drift along with Robinson.

And no one making movies today drifts as gracefully as Bill Forsyth does. He seems transfixed by the mountains and lakes and forests of the Northwest landscape, like a railroad traveler who finds himself suddenly moved by places he's never seen before. This feeling is the subject of his best movie, *Local Hero*, in which a young Houston oil executive, sent to negotiate with the people of an obscure Scottish village where his company wants to put a refinery, discovers that he's powerfully attracted to the villagers' way of life. After a few days there, he offers to exchange his life for that of the man he's been negotiating with. For Forsyth, Robinson's novel may be that kind of enchanted place, isolated and distant and apparently timeless, somewhere for the overburdened mind to wander. The virtue of this material for him is that, despite the American setting and the all-female cast of characters, the story has a free-floating, abstract quality, as if, like the ramshackle house the girls grow up in, it were somehow outside of history, a safe haven from the obligation to be specific—to be, in any sense, defined by social experience. Robinson's world is, for all its melancholy, peculiarly idyllic: an adolescent's dream of retreat from everything in life that threatens to become too hard and fixed and would therefore be too painful to lose. She imagines a state of permanent indeterminateness, a universe presided over by dotty aunts rather than by parents, teachers or lovers, and presents it as the state of nature, transcending time, sex, everything. It's easy to see why Forsyth, spotting this place from the train, would want to get off there. For someone of his temperament, it's accommodatingly vague and indifferent—no questions asked, a transient's paradise.

He finds his way around, in part, by superimposing his own map of memories, emotional connections and hoarded images onto Robinson's. Shy, gawky Ruth (Sara Walker) inhabits roughly the same territory as the moonstruck teenager played by Gordon John Sinclair in Forsyth's *Gregory's Girl*. The scenery has the mysterious placidity of the Scottish coast in *Local Hero*, and the house itself evokes a sense of piercing isolation in the midst of familiar clutter—just as the studio from which the deejay in *Comfort and Joy* broadcasts his morning monologue creates an overpowering feeling of loneliness. Forsyth seems, at times, to be drawing on images and moods from movies other than his own, the films he's never been able to get out of his head: the Northwest landscape, the stray dogs in Fingerbone's desolate streets, the disquieting textures of ice in winter and mud in spring, and the languid, gliding rhythms of the direction often suggest Robert Altman's dreamlike western *McCabe and Mrs. Miller* (an acknowledged favorite of Forsyth's); the deliberate pace of the narrative, the close attention to domestic detail and the yearning for trains sometimes call to mind *Pather Panchali*, Satyajit Ray's great film about childhood. And Forsyth seizes greedily on every one of the opportunities Robinson's novel gives him for his special brand of offhand visual comedy: A scene in which Sylvie and Ruth steal a boat from under a fisherman's appalled gaze, while pretending they don't know it's anybody's property, is much funnier than it is in the novel; and the long sequence in which the house is flooded is filled with wonderful, tossed-off bits of comic business.

Forsyth doesn't quite make *Housekeeping* his own—it's Marilynne Robinson's, and he knows it—but he's produced a superbly empathetic reading of it, a reverie on the novel's themes. Without departing from its spirit, the movie is actually an improvement on the book. Forsyth's fluid, relaxed style is, weirdly, more expressive of the story's motifs of transience and flux than Robinson's carefully worked, often painfully elaborate literary prose is. The beauty of her imagery sometimes seems to be fighting its way through a thicket of stiff, almost archaic diction: "What twinges, what

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aches I felt, what gathering toward fecundity, what novel and inevitable rhythms, were the work of my strenuous imagining." The book's about a kind of freedom yet the writing is oddly constricted; it never says The hell with it and just plays hooky, as the characters do. In Forsyth's movie, Robinson's images—the bridge, the inviting lake, the enveloping chaos of the house—come to us unobstructed, clarified by their passage through the filmmaker's consciousness. Their loveliness is direct and unforced, so we can wander among them as Forsyth does, discovering our own resonances, finding the connections to the private movies inside our heads.

The casting of Christine Lahti as Sylvie is perfect. Like Peter Riegert and Denis Lawson in *Local Hero*, and Bill Paterson in *Comfort and Joy*, Lahti is a low-key character actor with skill and charm enough for leading roles. Forsyth is about the only director around who gives actors like these such important parts—something else he may have picked up from Altman—and in each case his risky, intuitive casting decision has paid off. Lahti, a tall, friendly looking woman who moves in long, loose strides, gives Sylvie a full-bodied warmth that the character desperately needs. On the page, this childlike, half-mad drifter occasionally seems too mysterious and ethereal, and at other times verges on the cliché of the lovable eccentric. Lahti's performance is confident and unfussy: She plays Sylvie as a hopeless dreamer who always appears to herself utterly practical and down-to-earth. Her every bizarre action is carried out with startling briskness, as if it were the most natural thing in the world, and Lahti, without obvious effort, keeps pulling off delicately timed miracles of reading and gesture: the way Sylvie muses, genuinely puzzled, about why she doesn't read books anymore; the cracked insouciance of her morning greeting to the girls as she stands knee-deep in water in the flooded house; how she bounds from tie to tie across the railroad bridge, just a shade too quickly for perfect safety. In the movie's gorgeous final image, she walks for a second time across the bridge, into the darkness, this time followed by young Ruth, who has discovered her affinity with her aunt's strange sense of freedom. The novel *Housekeeping* is about that fragile rapport of sympathetic dreamers. The movie *Housekeeping*, with Forsyth and Lahti making all the right connections, actually embodies it. □

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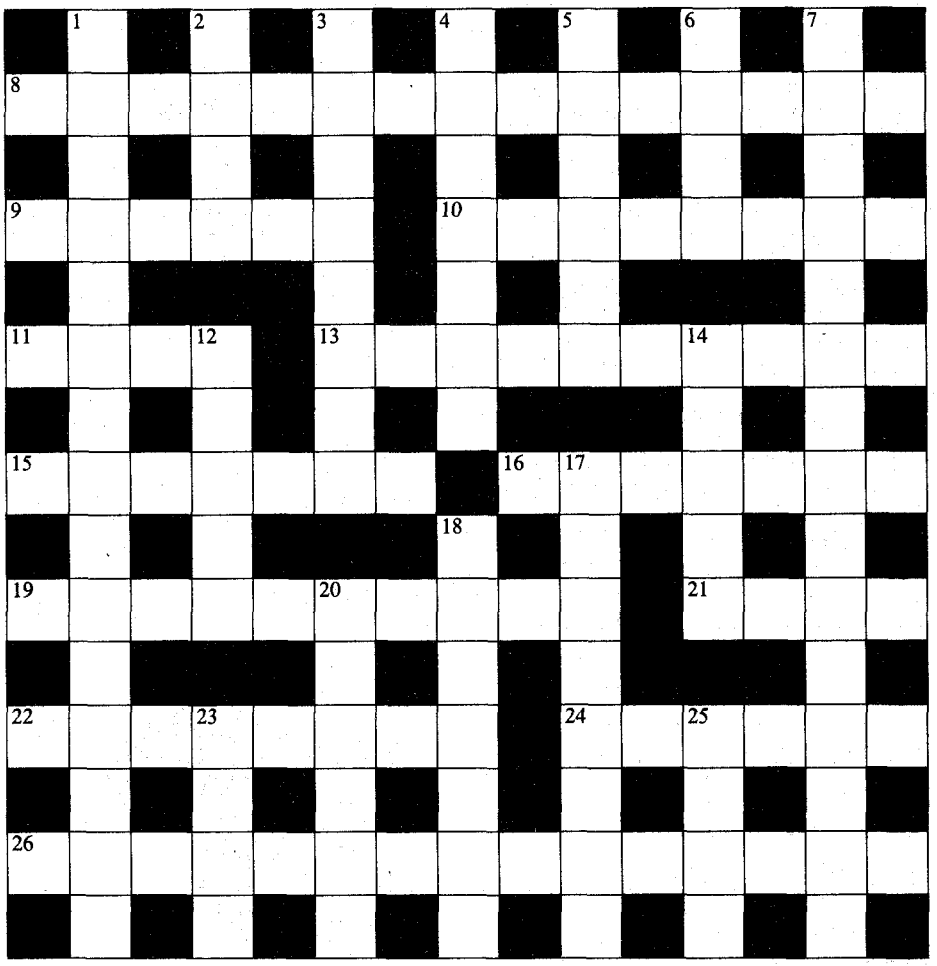

ACROSS

8 If one doesn't have automatic transmission one might have to. (5,3,7)
10 and 9 After ten years it was broken by the use of a horse. (3,5,2,4)
11 and 12 down Quit, and use the iron, if you want the latest news. (4-5)
13 Coming from the Danes, the Siamese version might put you to sleep. (10)
15 Seen off in certain style, being committed as such. (7)
16 Reflections of the evil in what a certain type of criminal does on the streets? (7)
19 and 21 A very old song that implies Bob, the comedian, can barely speak. (10,4)
22 A recent model auto inside, as some people order. (1,2,5)
24 Is such a servant's uniform somewhat reddish-purple? (6)
26 X is such a letter, with what one puts in to play and write, going to the extreme. (15)

DOWN

1 The country's overweight people? (The cliché implies we don't want to live on it.) (3,3,2,3,4)
2 Such a cry? It's supposed to be almost impossible—as aliens might come from this. (4)
3 Not the best of times as those who hide their age take this. (3,5)
4 The composer certainly sounds as though he might be from England. (7)
5 With your coat off, obviously, at the time of crash you might be sorry you did. (That's what the Greeks did at 10-9). (6)
6 It's a rather up-and-coming place in Italy. (4)
7 Waving the goblins down when depression caused by such? (8,7)
12 See 11 across
14 The woman I'd the trouble with? (5)
17 Is the devil supposed to be like an animal? (8)
18 Awful skin, with nothing over us. (7)
20 Just deserts should be. (6)
23 On the corner of a sail, it sounds as though it might provide the answer here. (4)
25 One might do it 'til ready for the old movie queen. (4)

PUZZLED?

No more cross words. If you don't see why "Lures" are "Ground Rules," send for those of Mr. Lewis to *The Nation*, 72 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10011.

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ANDREW RITCHIE

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